FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX



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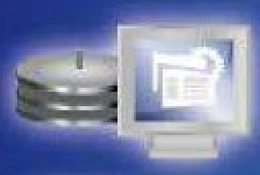
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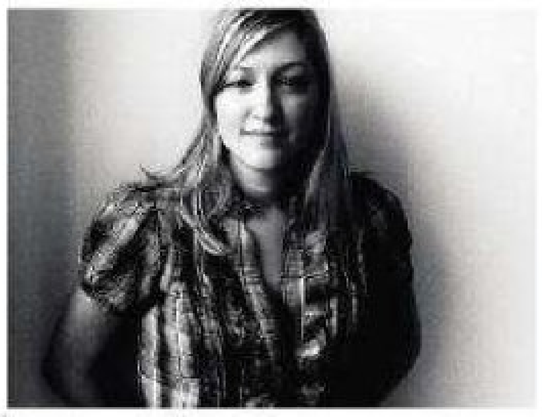
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Welcome... to a visionary issue



Look ma, we're all grown up! So, what do you think of our bigger size? I'm delighted that we're able to make a little more room for all the art that we showcase every month. I hope you are, too.

This issue is epic in more ways than one. There's an incredible cast of artists taking part: from Sam Burley – one of 2010's Rising Stars – to established greats such as Stephan Martiniere and Daniel Dociu, we've got an unmatched line-up of artists on hand to share their landscape secrets.

Have you put up your huuuuge poster yet? Let me know which of the images you plumped for staring at each day. I'm sure that decorating your wall with some stellar art will inspire you to up your game and improve your own work at every opportunity.

Maybe this is the first time that you've picked us up from the newsstand. If so, welcome to the ImagineFX community... come in and take a good look around! We're here to celebrate art in all of its fantastical forms, so please let me know what you think. Also, why not join our community of friendly artists online? We're at www.imaginefx.com. Pop over and say hello.

I also love our spectacular word-free cover this month from Raphael Lacoste. Our lucky subscribers get this sort of uncluttered view each and every month (and without the barcode, too!). Take a look at page 34 to see how you can subscribe and save money. If you want to sign up to the best digital art mag around, but would like to save on trees, we're also available digitally – turn to page 81 for more information on that.

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

Our special cover for subscribers this issue.



Tell us what you think!

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Featured artists

Every month, ImagineFX calls on some of the finest artists in the world to offer you the best guidance and to share their techniques and inspiration...



Dylan Cole



After an internship at ILM, Dylan knew he wanted to work in film. Years later he has some Hollywood's biggest movies on his CV, including The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King, TRON: Legacy and Avatar. Discover why he's one of the most sought-after matte painters in the film industry in this issue's insightful interview. Turn to page 44 and be inspired!

www.dylancolestudio.com



Robh Ruppel



Robh joins the likes of Kekai Kotaki, Stephan Martiniere and Daniel Dociu as one of eight artists framed in our epic landscapes showcase feature this issue. An award-winning concept artist, art director and matte painter, Robh cut his teeth in movies at Boss Films before landing a job working on the video game Uncharted 2. Prepare to be wowed on page 58!

www.robhruppel.com



Sam Burley



One of our 2010 Rising Star winners returns on page 76, showing how water can add a sense of energy and realism to your epic art. Focusing on the advantages a wave can bring to a composition, Sam explores colour and layer usage, bringing a sense of experimentation to a sci-fi landscape. It's good to have Sam back where he belongs, on the pages of ImagineFX!

www.samburleystudio.com



Emmanuel Malin



Although he studied architecture and later took to medical illustration, Emmanuel has found his true calling working in commercial illustration, video games and comics. He draws on his background to create unique, believable worlds and this issue he sheds light on his process. Turn to page 84 to discover how to create vibrant environments from simple shapes and textures.

www.emmanuelmalin.com



Kevin Crossley



Having cut his teeth on the pages of 2000AD, Kevin is now a comic and concept artist with a number of video games and strips fighting for space on his website. This month he demonstrates how a speedy, painterly sketch can develop your digital art skills and artistic knowledge. Take up Kevin's challenge and spend 60 minutes a day sketching a portrait by turning to page 94.

www.kevcrossley.com



Maciej Kuciara



With a CV that includes the cream of video game developers, including Naughty Dog, Crytek and People Can Fly, Maciej is an in-demand concept artist. Following hot on the heels of last issue's dragon workshop, Maciej demonstrates how to unify a painting of disparate influences through colour to create his iconic heroine. Turn to page 100 to see the full results of his experimentation.

www.maciejkuciara.com



ImagineFX Cover artist

Sit down, gaze at the majesty of Raphael Lacoste's art and allow yourself to be transported away to far-off lands and distant planets



Raphael Lacoste

COUNTRY: Canada
SOFTWARE: Photoshop
WEB: www.raphael-lacoste.com

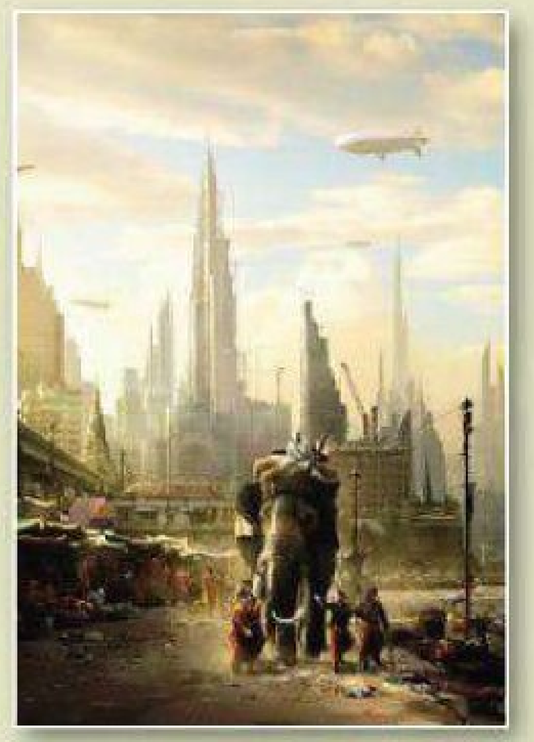
Raphael started in theatre set design in Bordeaux, France before moving to Canada to work in video games at Ubisoft Montreal, on titles such as Assassin's Creed and Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones, which earned a VES award for outstanding pre-rendered visuals. He's now working as senior concept artist, matte painter and production designer for films.

Portfolio

Raphael's enviable portfolio highlights…



"This was a digital matte painting done for the movie Mr Nobody, art directed by Francois Schuiten," says Raphael of this atmospheric sci-fi cityscape made for a film that jumps between the 20th and 21th centuries to recount the life choices of the world's oldest man.



Raphael is also an accomplished illustrator and created this painting for the cover of the Hugo and Nebula awarded sci-fi book, The Windup Girl. Here he got to mix his love of landscapes with storytelling skills developed in the video games industry.



Moving into the film industry, Raphael came up with concept art and produced matte paintings for 2008's Journey to the Center of the Earth by New Line Cinema. "I was in charge of the scene that reveals the lush environment which lies the centre of the Earth, the Lagoon reveal," says Raphael, adding, "It was a important scene in the movie."

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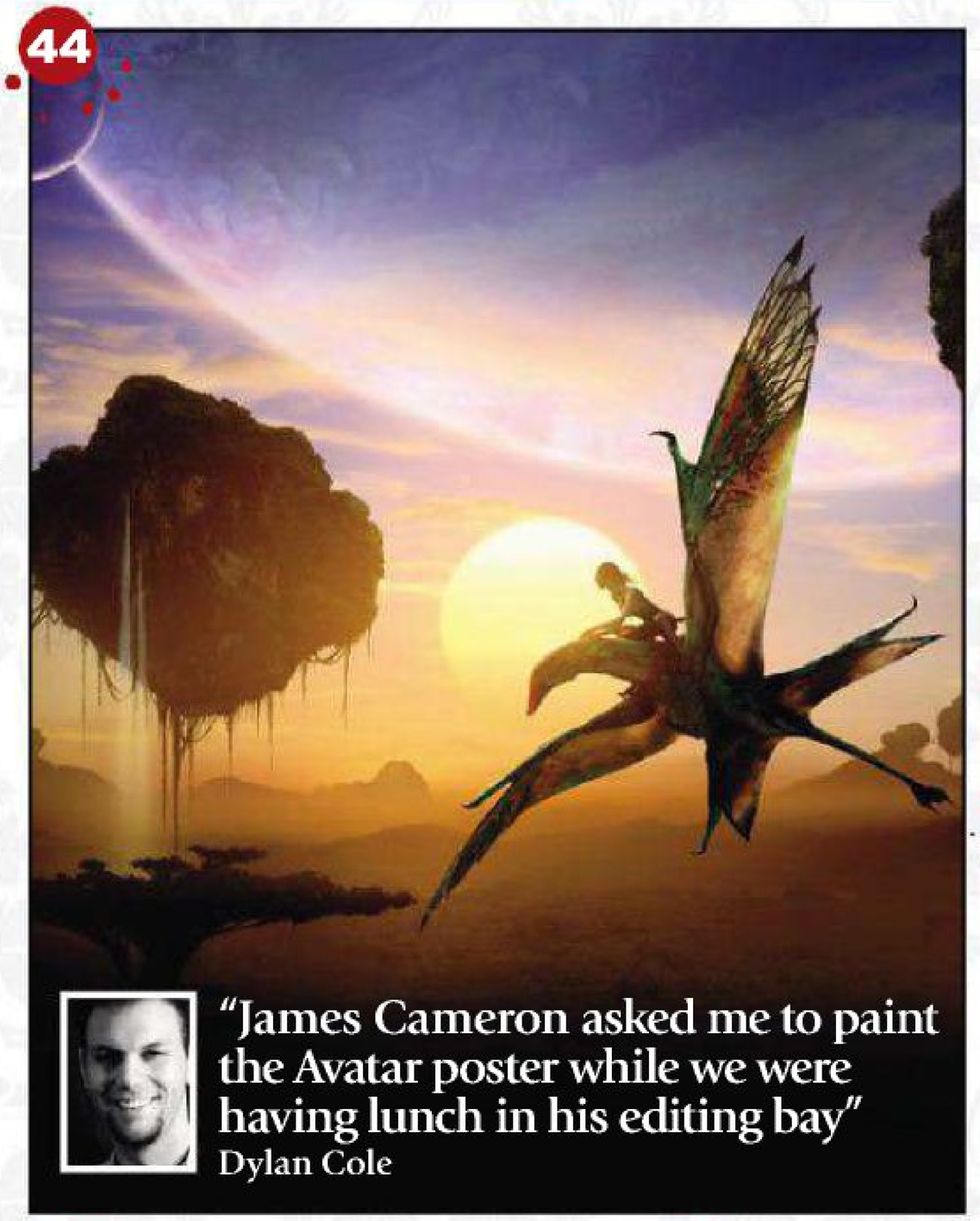
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"James Cameron asked me to paint the Avatar poster while we were having lunch in his editing bay"
Dylan Cole

Reader FXPosé
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 8 for the best new art















ImagineFX Workshops

Advice and techniques from pro artists…



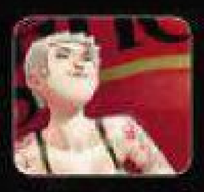
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Sam Burley uses waves as a compositional element.



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Artist Q&A

36 This month's Q&A topics...
Unify your lighting schemes, draw sinewy hands, age your indoor environments, paint claws and paws, design a mech's armour and lots more!





Paint a dramatic waterscape

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Turn to page 114 for more…

ON YOUR DVD

This month's essential art resources…

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THE PLACE TO SHARE YOU[illegible] ART

ImagineFX ARTIST of the MONTH

Anton Gustilo

LOCATION: Philippines
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EMAIL: pixelcharlie@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Anton's been crazy about comic books, Star Wars and video games since high school. "Although I studied industrial design at college, I always imagined that I'd be drawing and illustrating for a living, either as a comic book artist or a graphic designer," he says.

Right now Anton's doing just that: he's busy at Singapore's Mikoishi Studios, working on games for the PC and iPhone. "My art style is influenced by comic book artists such as Jim Lee and Joe Madureira, and I've certainly learned a thing or two from the numerous unsung art heroes in the concept art industry, and ImagineFX of course!"

1 A SMALL WINDOW "This was my first attempt at painting dragons and I'm happy with how it turned out. I wanted to depict the classic good vs evil scenario. I've seen many paintings using this colour palette, which gives it the feeling of sunset, so I figured I'd try it out for myself."

2 THE LAST STAND "I'm a huge Diablo fan and I can't wait for Diablo III. Last Man Standing was the original title and I was planning to have a female barbarian standing over a fallen male barbarian facing Diablo as it emerged from the pits of Hell. As the picture developed I became ambitious and decided to add the other three character classes."



ARTIST OF THE MONTH
Anton wins himself a copy of Exotique 5 and Character Modeling 3. To find out more about these two indispensable art resources, go to www.ballisticpublishing.com.

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

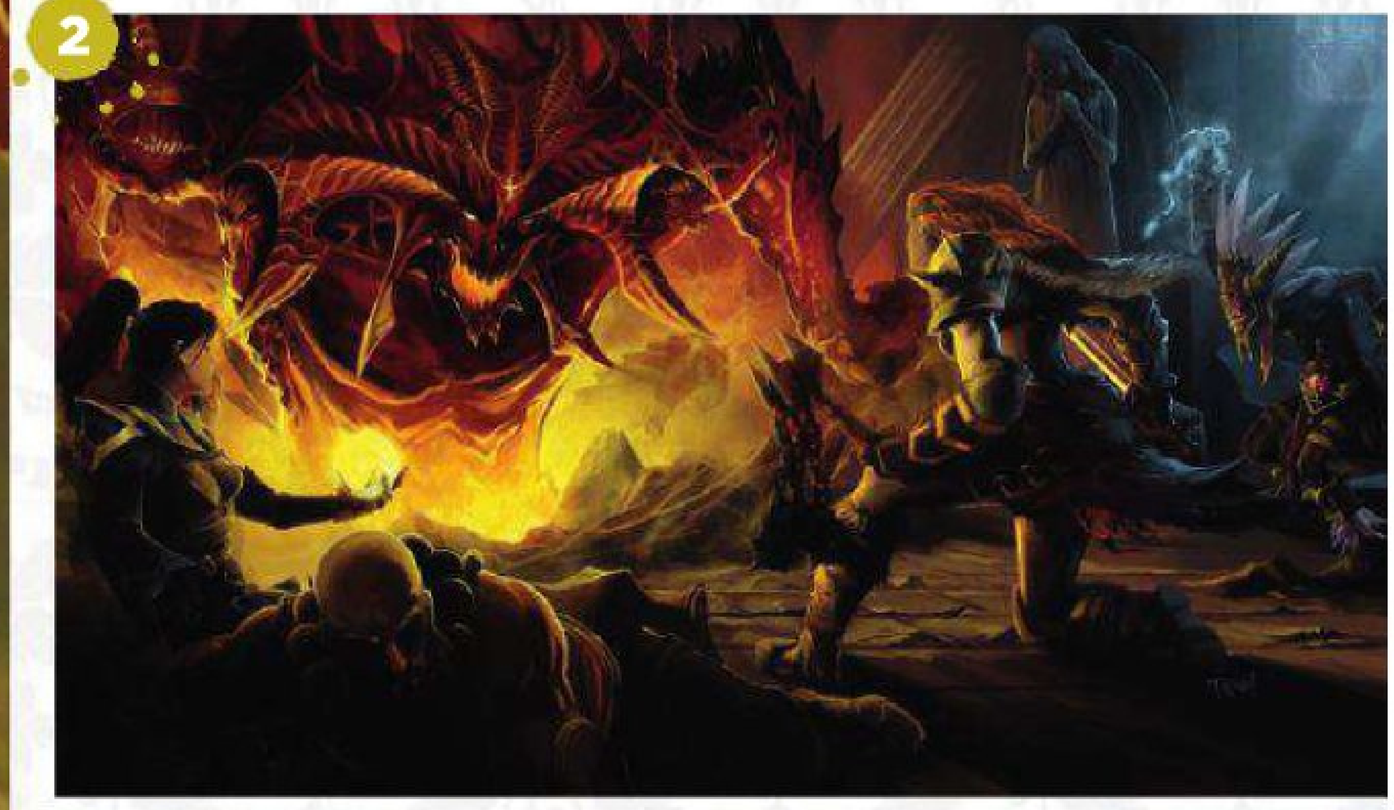
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Artist crit

Acclaimed fantasy artist Dan Scott gives Anton's face-off with dragons the thumbs up



"The composition does a great job of leading the viewer through the image, and the background accentuates the dynamic motion. The colours are awesome, too!"



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1



Luisa Rafidi
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SOFTWARE: Photoshop, ArtRage



Nineteen-year-old Luisa is a self-taught artist who learnt Photoshop five years ago. It was only after she finished high school that Luisa decided to pursue art as a career, and she's currently studying graphic design with this aim in mind. Indeed, she harbours a long-held dream of working for Nintendo as its concept artist. "I'm glad I chose art as my career, because now I can't see myself doing anything besides drawing."

1 SARIA "This is the first from a series of portraits commissioned for The Zelda Project. It was fun giving a fantasy character a more realistic appearance. This was sketched with a mechanical pencil and coloured on Photoshop. The girl is Saria, a character from Nintendo's The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time."

2 HOT CHOCOLATE "I've always wanted to paint something that had a very relaxing and warm atmosphere. The days I spent in Europe when it was really cold were my inspiration, and it was fun working with all those brown tones. I used Photoshop and applied textures to give a more natural feel to the painting."

3 AWAY IN A MUSHROOM HOUSE "My first painting of scenery, and a night-time one at that! I loved working with the lighting, and I was glad I could finally fulfil my desire to paint something involving mushrooms. Everything was done in Photoshop. After I finished it I realized it was too colourful and so I slapped a blue/purple Hue layer on top of everything."

2



3



FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

1

2



Chris Cold

LOCATION: Belarus
WEB: chriscold.deviantart.com
EMAIL: coldbackbone@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, 3ds Max



Chris started painting digitally in 2008, although he's never studied art and thinks he never will. "I like to tell stories and visual arts is what I use to express myself. I try not to focus only on one genre and my inspiration sources aren't limited by genres, styles or mediums. My goal is to reach a level when I'll be able to paint anything I can imagine."

1 INDUSTRIAL DAWN "For this futuristic city I used 3ds Max to model a base for it, then textured and added details in Photoshop. It's one of my older artworks from the time when I was still using a mouse for painting, so this is also why it took around 20 hours to finish."

2 ELECTRIC PULSE "Part of my own personal project. In this painting the character is holding his own skull. After he died, an unknown force created a new body for him and planted his mind and soul into it, leaving the old, dead body an empty, soulless shell."

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"All those lovely textures in Chris's Electric Pulse bring depth to a limited colour palette, while implying detail. The scrawly line work crackles and fizzes within the image with a life of its own, making the image feel charged…"
Paul Tysall,
Art Editor

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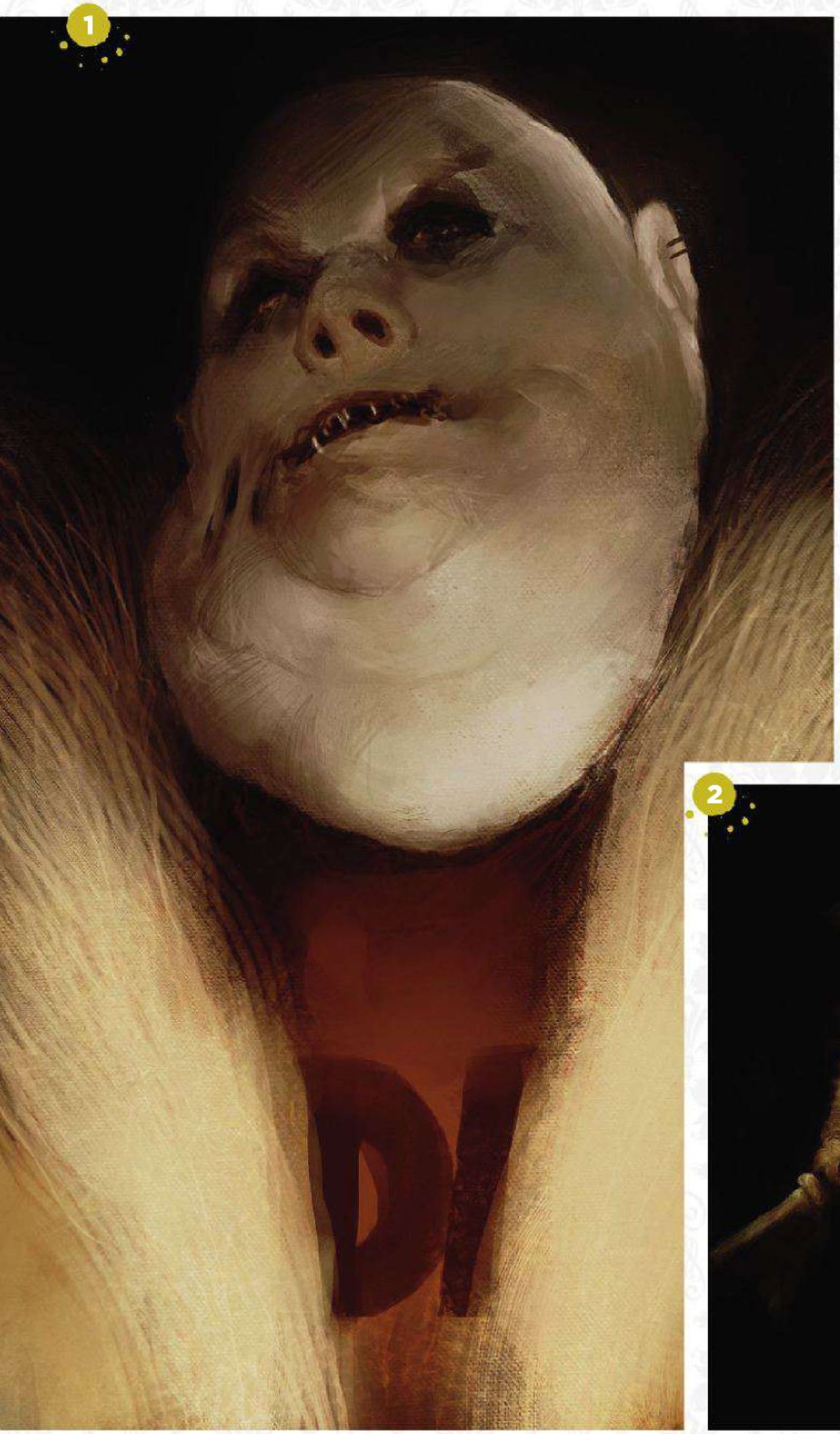
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THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

1



Michael Berube

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WEB: hunchbackart.blogspot.com
EMAIL: hunchbackart@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop



"I got into digital art when a friend showed me her tablet and the work she had done on it," says Michael. "I got one shortly after." He found ConceptArt.org about three years ago. "The site had art that I had never imagined could be done," he says. "Ever since then I've been trying to learn as much as I can."

Michael has a particular love for art that looks effortless, that isn't rendered meticulously. "That's always my goal in art," he says.

1 FREAKY "I had this image in my head. I had been looking at Craig Mullins' work and it just kind of evolved out of a drawing I did. I'm happy with the perspective of it; it's not straight on, so it looks a bit more interesting."

2 WARLORD "This dude was painted for the teen challenge over on ConceptArt. I used a reference of Ilakae (a member on the forums – we call him Kitty) for the head. The lighting was the big thing and the colours took a bit of tinkering to get right."

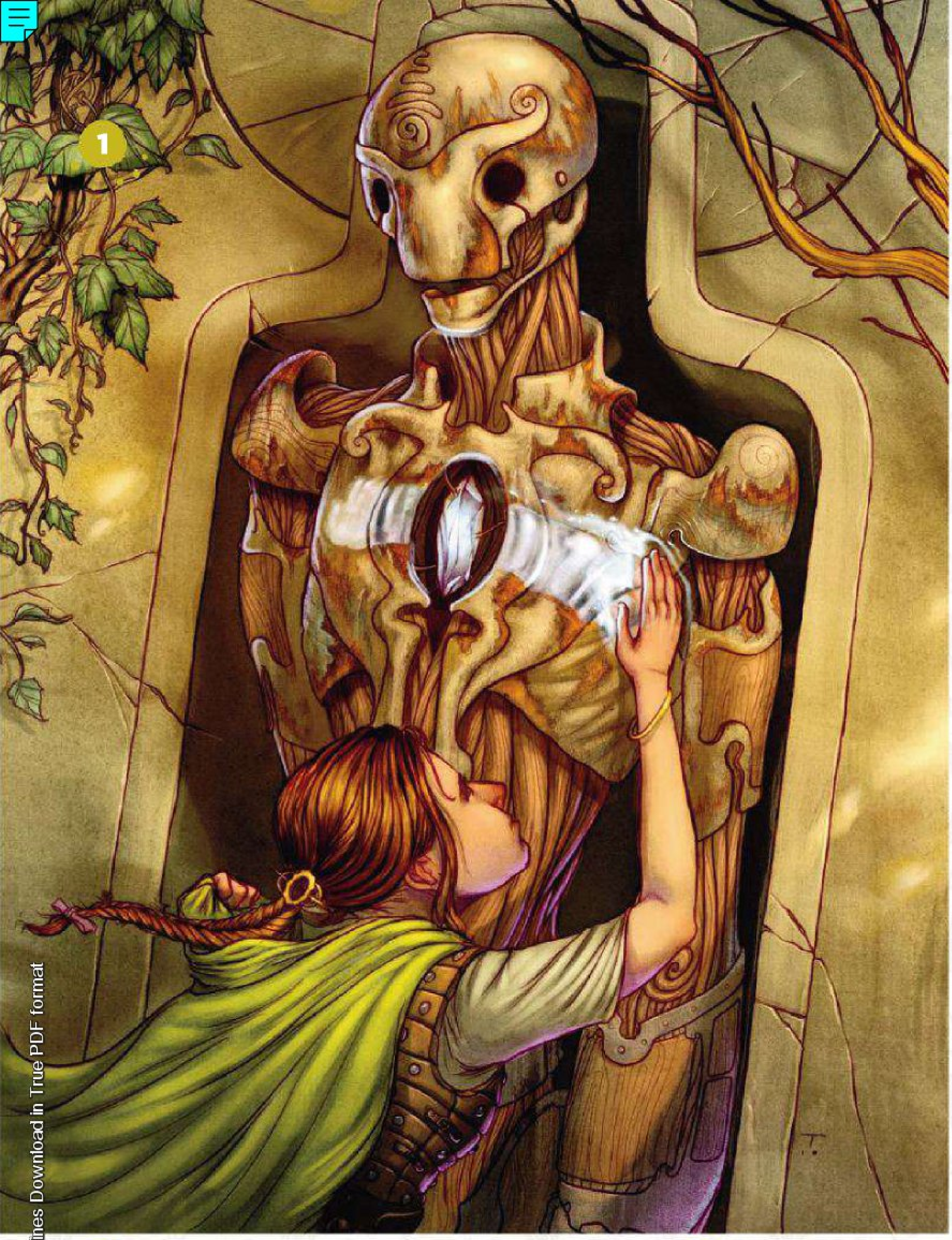
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THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Tim Durning

LOCATION: US
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EMAIL: mail@timdurning.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Tim became interested in digital art once he realised it's the most effective way to get what's in his imagination out into the real world. "Since I entered the illustration realm, I've been working in the publishing, gaming and comic book markets, with clients like The New York Times, UPS and Fantasy Flight Games," he tells us.

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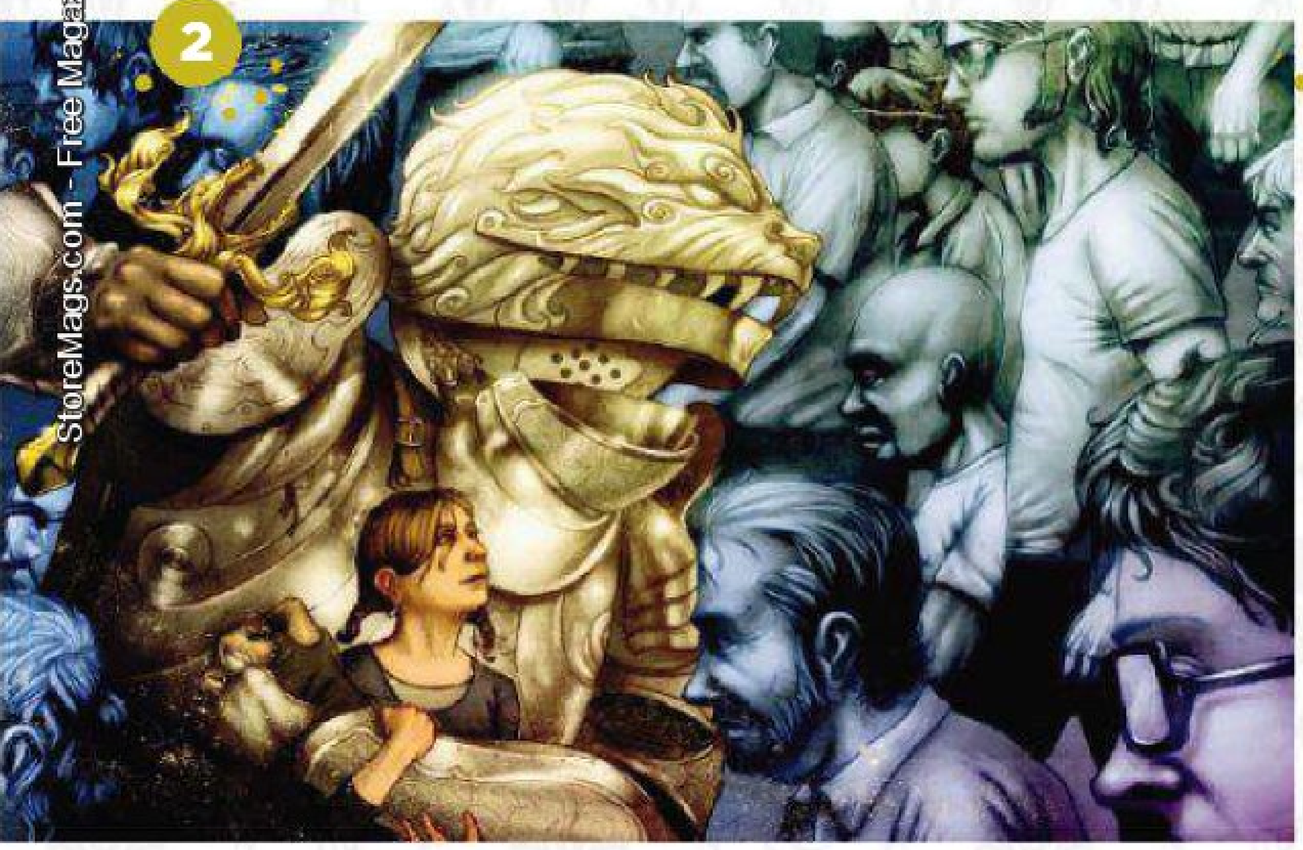


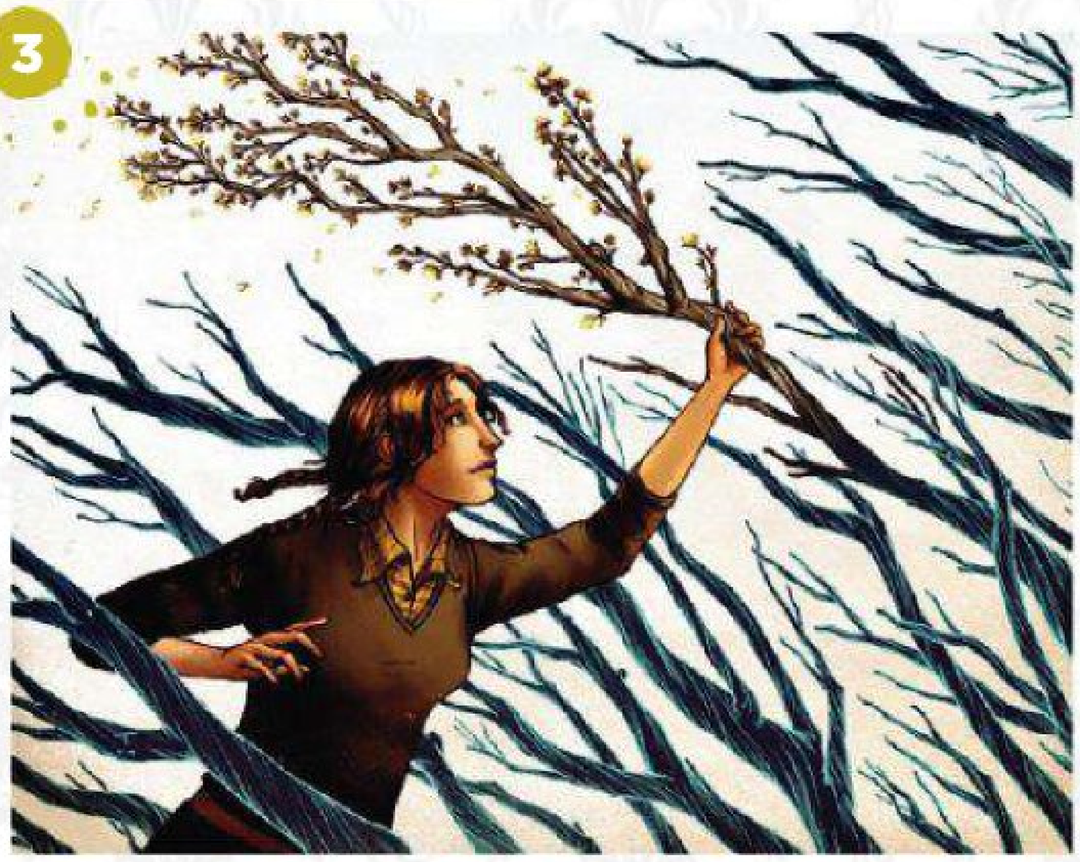
"Tim's imagination certainly shines through in his work. His colour palette choices have a delicate yet forthright way of helping to get his story across. I thoroughly recommend a trawl through his blog, which reveals Tim's broad range of styles."
Claire Howlett, Editor

1 RUST "Done for the ArtOrder blog, illustrating the quote, 'a sword, a spade and a thought should never be allowed to rust'."

2 A GIRL AND HER WHITE KNIGHT "I tried to challenge myself in this promotional piece, in both the metal armour design and the inclusion of this many figures."

3 SPRING, OR SHE INSPIRES "A piece illustrating the concept of inspiration, done for a dual gallery show with fellow illustrator S.M. Vidaurri."





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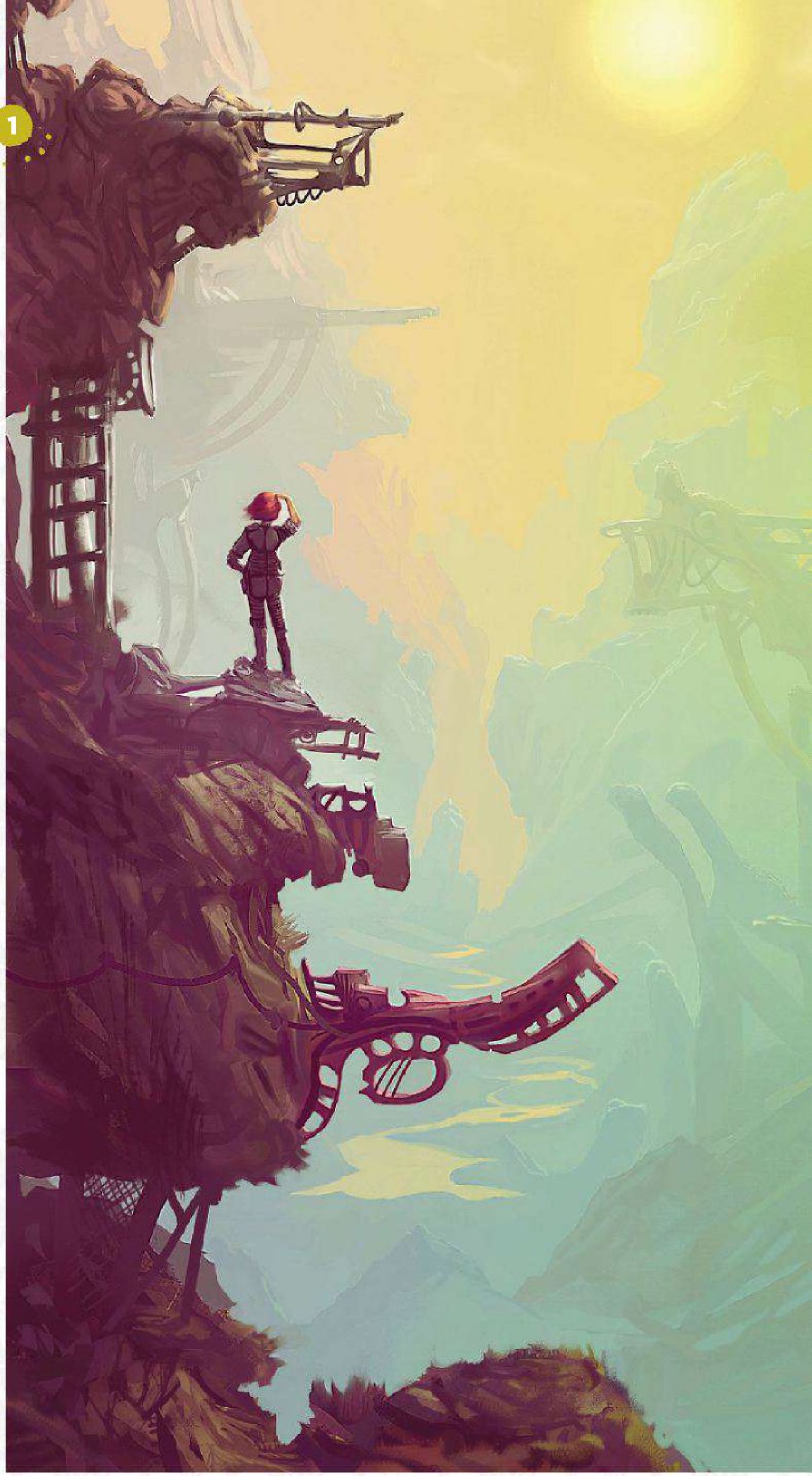
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THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Toby Mobbs

LOCATION: England
WEB: www.tobymobbs.com
EMAIL: tmobbs@hotmail.co.uk
SOFTWARE: Photoshop and Painter

With an illustration degree to his name, Toby is trying to break into the world of art and design. "My first experiences of digital art were through stumbling by digitalart.org," he says. "These art communities inspired me through the helpful, if sometimes brutal, critiques by fellow artists and by observing the techniques of others."



1 YELLOW VALLEY "This piece was an exercise in creating a textural foreground with a strong silhouette, with a more indistinct, subtle background that fades out into the misty horizon. The patchwork of technology and architecture built into the cliff-sides hints at a forgotten history, which may have only recently been rediscovered by the character in the foreground."

2 LABORIOUS VOYAGE "In this piece I wanted to apply a fantastical element to the concept of migrating animals, specifically lumbering turtles. I approached this by giving the whole scene a sense of grandiose scale, with rugged terrain and lots of attention to atmospheric depth. The biggest challenge was adding a lot of texture without drawing attention away from the focal points."

3 MOUNTAIN TOWN "A subject I find very difficult to capture, yet very rewarding, is built-up, man-made environments that have a feeling of tangibility. In this piece I wanted to juxtapose the rusted settlement built from scraps with the looming, timeless columns of rock surrounding it."

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

2



3



IMAGINEFX CRIT



"It's not enough to have a great fantasy idea – abandoned technology that's melded with the land – you've got to ground it in real life to make it work. Toby's atmospherics work in Yellow Valley has done just that: I love the warm, dusty mood of this scene."
Cliff Hope,
Operations Editor

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Want to see your digital art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece of art, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them.
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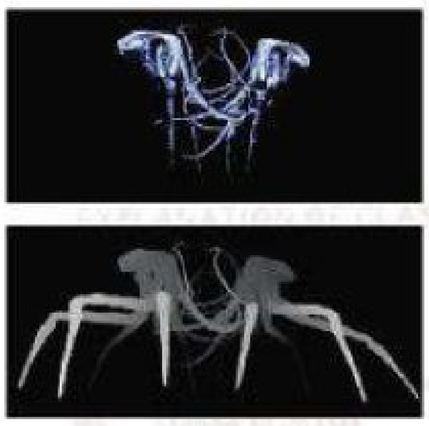
Breaking down ARTISTIC BORDERS





Monster magic The low-budget film Monsters has been hailed as the new District 9. Director Gareth Edwards reveals how speed painting informed his tale of alien immigration…





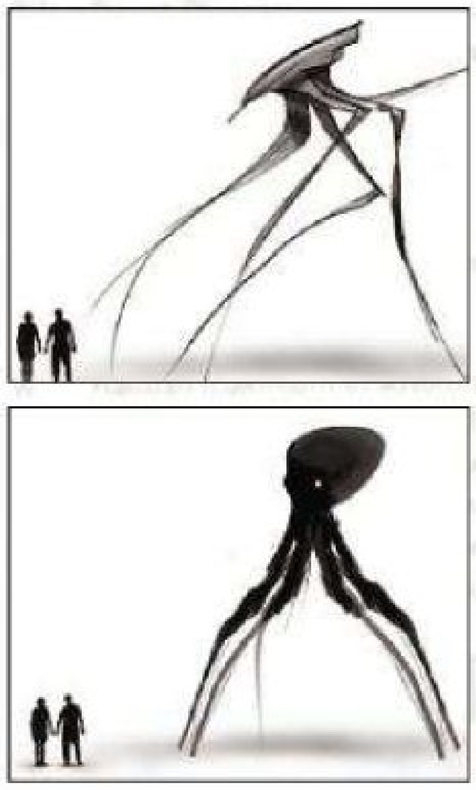


Using shop-bought software such as Photoshop, After Effects and 3ds max, Gareth Edwards managed to make Hollywood magic in his bedroom.

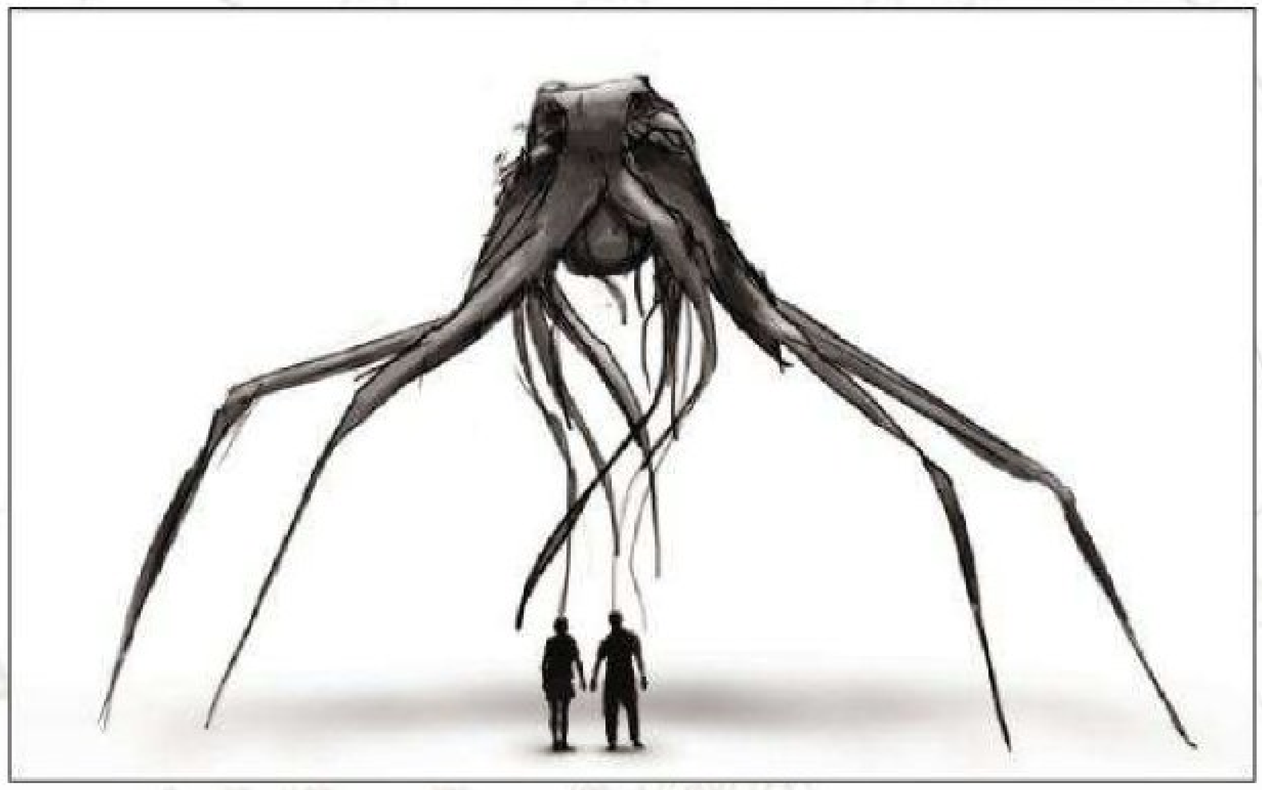


Director Gareth Edwards doesn't do conventional. Created on a shoestring budget using Photoshop and After Effects, Monsters is certainly not a normal monster movie. Ten years spent creating VFX and matte paintings for TV docudramas led Gareth to make his film in a different way.

Using just two actors and a soundman, drafting in an army of locals to stand in as extras playing themselves in unconventional situations, and making the most of off-the-shelf software and cameras, Monsters was filmed on impulse. Scene









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CLASS WARFARE

Diablo III's art director Christian Lichtner talks us through designing the sharp shapes of the long-awaited dungeon crawler's new Demon Hunter class.

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OFFLINE OFFICE

Nick Harris explains why there's a mountain of books in his office, and why he keeps his workhorse PC firmly disconnected from the outside world.

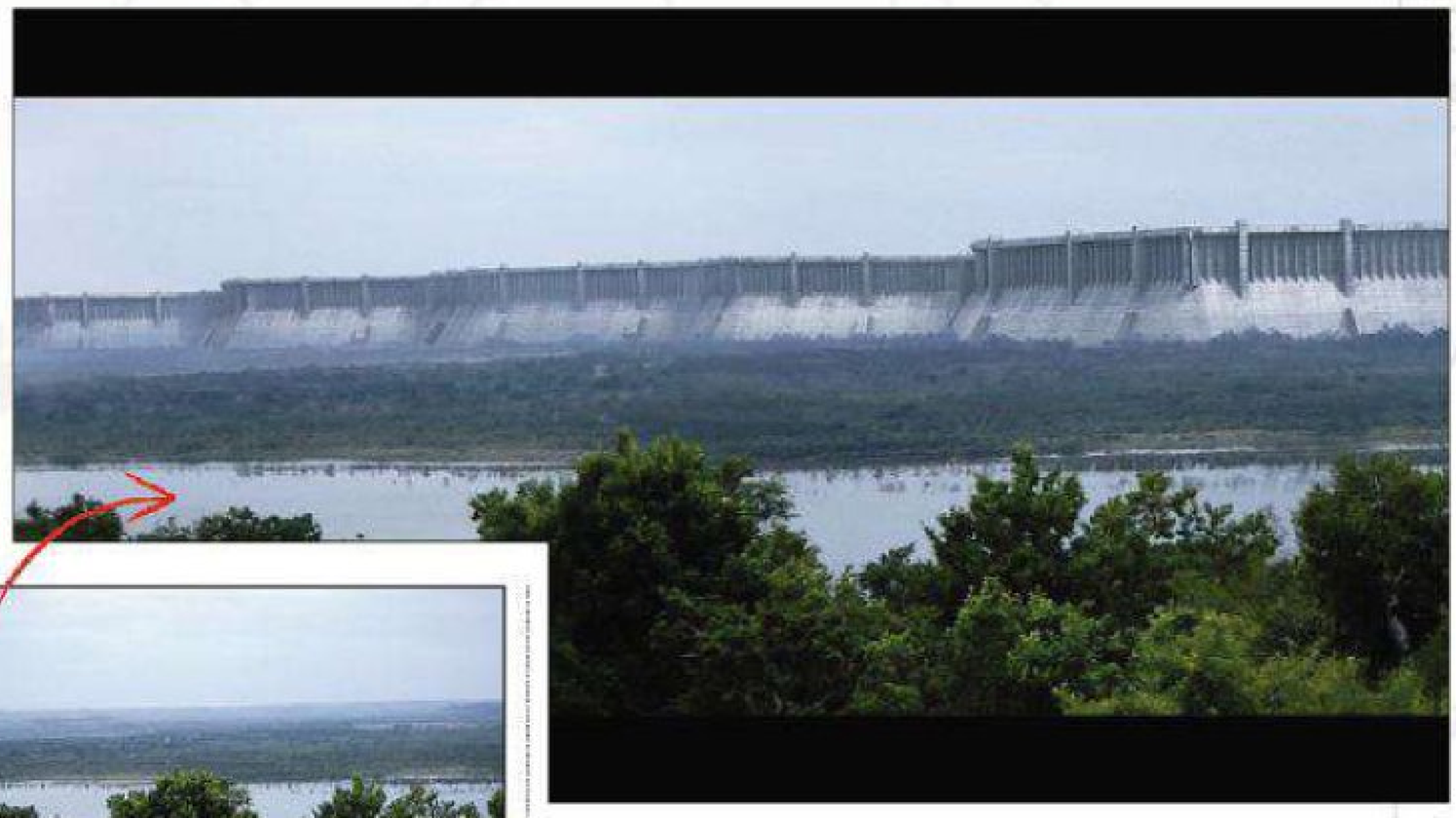
Page 22



ZERO-G GORE ZONE

Ian Milham, art director of Visceral Games' Dead Space 2, reveals the differences his art team introduced when creating the survival horror sequel.

Page 24



composition was influenced by random events and spontaneous conditions.

Inspired by speed painting, Gareth composed his shots on location, looking for captivating shapes, lines and light that would make a scene work on an emotional level. "That whole speed painting philosophy of churning something out fast – don't be afraid to experiment early on – kind of applied to Monsters when we started filming," he says.

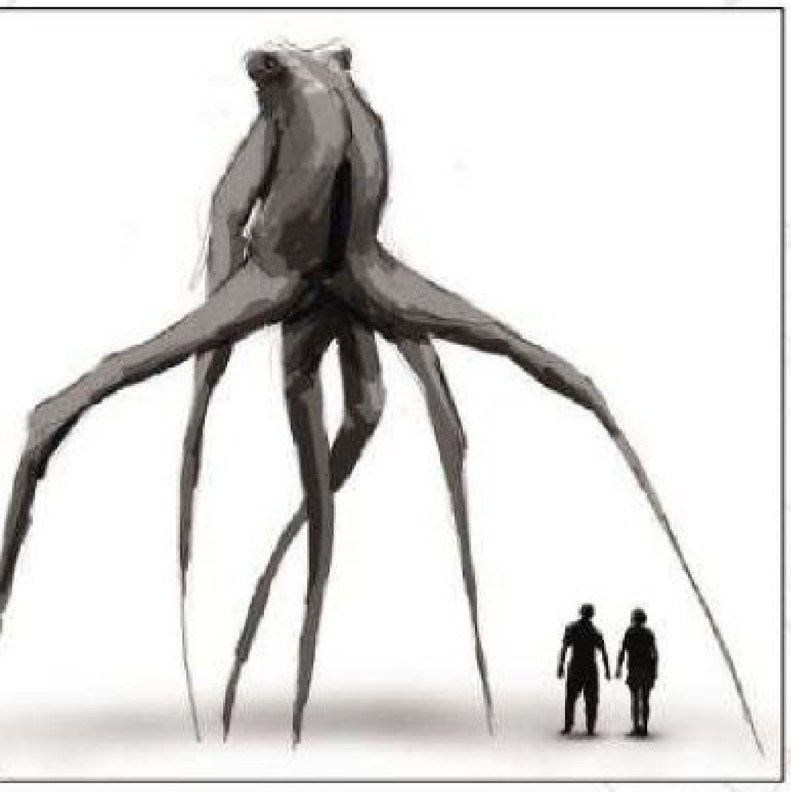
Rather than a detailed script, Gareth had a story mapped out and each scene had beats written down – moments to capture to draw an emotional response from the audience. When composing a scene, Gareth says he'd ignore the detail in front of him, using the areas of contrast between the lights and darks of a location to dictate his compositions instead. "I'd try to frame them in such a way as if it was in Photoshop, using Layers," he explains. "I always thought the camera should have a sticker on it that said 'real-time rendering', because whenever you move it, it updates instantly."

"The idea that you can come up with something better when you're sat in your bedroom, as opposed to on location when you're seeing exactly how the shot will look, is nonsense," says Gareth. Above is his wall around the United States.

This process meant that Gareth filmed on location for six weeks but edited for eight months, cutting 100 hours of footage down to a tight 90 minutes. But he insists that his love of digital art helped him to develop a fast, responsive filming process.

> **"Learning Photoshop and speed painting is like the Karate Kid of film-making"**

"Learning Photoshop and speed painting is like the Karate Kid of film-making," explains Gareth. "You're doing this laborious thing every day, thinking 'why the hell am I doing this? I'm wasting my life' – and then it's like someone goes to punch you and









Money? Gareth wanted less: "I didn't want that pressure to deliver a hit film and to hit a certain demographic. This was my one chance to make a film and I wanted to do something that wasn't what you'd call a Hollywood movie."

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

GARETH EDWARDS

The Monsters director talks creature design…

What inspired your monsters?
The animal I borrowed the most from was probably the octopus, mixed with an elephant that had crab-like legs. Its texture and body was bioluminescence that would flicker on and off. There's a bit of everything I like in there – it's a bit of a Frankenstein's monster.

What makes a good monster?
You can't stray too far from nature. The reason why we react the way we do and have emotional reactions to shapes – like you'd look at something and think it's cute, intelligent or aggressive – is because they're all based on animals in nature. You can't invent it; it's in us. It's an instinctive reaction. You're tapping into that when you're designing an alien. Whether you like it or not, you're designing a new animal based on all of the rules that already exist on Earth.

So, real life makes for the best monsters?
For one scene, I was inspired by a boat trip I took in Australia. We saw a wake, it got closer and closer and then this inflated pig rose from the water. I remembered how weird it was, where the thing you're looking at isn't the thing you think it is. In this case, it was a crocodile playing with a dead pig; it thought we couldn't see it, but the pig gave it away. In Monsters, I took a more surreal interpretation, having an alien play with a jet plane.



Creating the aliens proved to be even more time consuming than Gareth thought it would be, but the results are superb.

Gareth's next film is the Hollywood reboot of the Godzilla franchise.

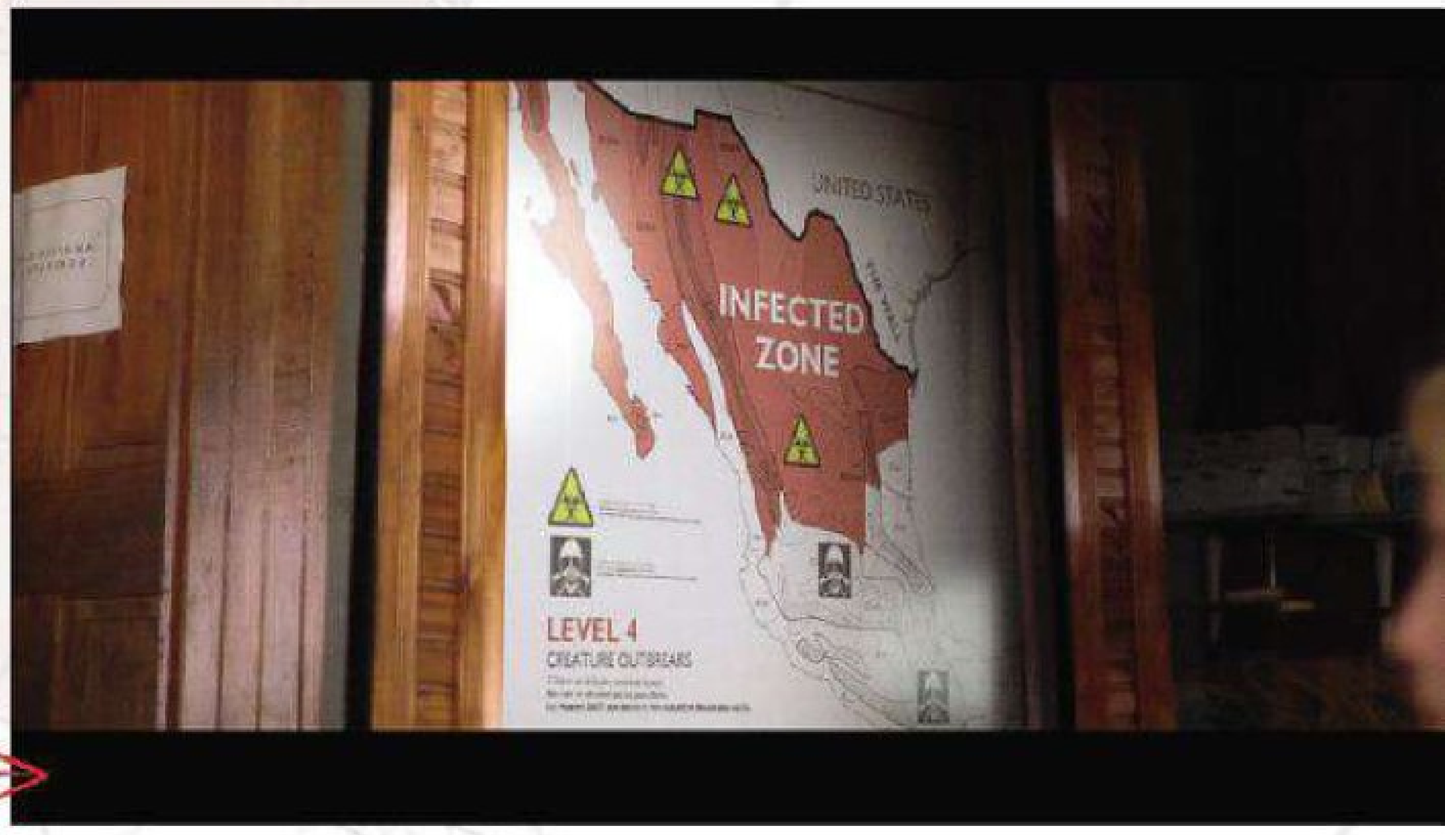
www.monstersfilm.com

Continued from previous page...





The film builds a unique imagined reality through incidental signs and posters, created in Photoshop and added into real-life locations. "I did want to make the signs a bit less cluttered, but then you're balancing it with the fact the audience has a second to look at the shot. It has to read really quickly," says Gareth.



"I was trying my hardest to let nature come in and piss on my parade"

you block them, because you have this subconscious understanding of the relationship between shapes and light."

Rather than being intimidated by random events and conditions, Gareth embraced them. "I was trying my hardest to let nature come in and piss on my parade," laughs the director. He describes how in Photoshop he's always adding layers and random textures to "add crap into the computer because it doesn't naturally want to do it," but on location "you get all that for free".

Gareth used Photoshop to add imagined signs and posters into his scenes. To create atmospheric realism, tanks are parked quietly in side streets awaiting the creatures – Monsters is imagined reportage from an alien frontline. You're on the ground, looking up side-by-side with the film's actors.

As all artists know, less is often more, and it's a rule Gareth used when adding his effects. "With cinematography and with storytelling, if you say too much, if you explain too much, it dulls things for the audience," he confirms. "There are magic moments that happen just between giving too much and too little information that really excite people. It's true of composition, and true of painting and true of storytelling."





"I'd base all my designs loosely on what was there in terms of colour schemes and fonts," says Gareth of his imagined signs. He admits: "Often the fonts were terrible and you're so tempted to change them, but then you have to remember this is how it would be in the developing world."

Throughout the whole process, Gareth was looking for emotional reaction – be it from a random event or an actor's delivery of an ad-libbed line. In a final, telling moment, Gareth says: "I'm really pleased I came to film through Photoshop and digital painting because, weirdly, I learned so much more than I would just chatting to actors for hours on end about what makes you emotionally react to an image."





Lord of the art

Earthy tones Philip Straub offers some insight into video game art direction

Known for his epic personal works, epitomised in his art book Utherworlds, Philip Straub and Snowblind Studios took a different approach to the art behind the RPG game The Lord of the Rings: War in the North, out this year.

As art director, he led by example. "My personal art is what I'd describe as high fantasy, with saturated colours, whereas The Lord of the Rings is grounded in reality," he says. "With the warfare in the game, the art had to be a little grittier, too."

The team came up with over 45 enemy variants in the game, as well as the lead characters. "You'll talk to Gandalf and Frodo, but also a cast of new characters," Philip tells us. "Stone giants, undead summoners and epic, 100-foot tall characters that haven't been released yet."

See more at **www.warinthenorth.com**.

The art team developed between 30 and 40 concept paintings per character. They avoided bright colours, instead using more realistic tones.

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The Demon Hunter character comes in male and female models, but retains the same sharp lines of the core design.

Christian explains his character's process: "We tried a desert ranger and a Middle Eastern look – it just didn't work. So we took a break to rethink what we were doing and we came upon the idea of making a much darker class."

Art demons

Timed to perfection Blizzard's latest character design has taken her sweet time to leave the concept board…



Almost six years in the making, Diablo III is Blizzard's next big release. The process has been a rewarding one for the game's art team. "We create a ton of concept art and we do reiterate a lot, but only because we need to get them right," says art director Christian Lichtner, adding that all this imagery will soon be released in a new Diablo art book.

"Just looking at the sheer volume of art we have in the catalogues helps," says Blizzard's senior designer on Diablo III Jason Bender. "If we're looking for a little bit of creative juice, just looking at the stuff we've done over the years gets us excited."

The latest design to emerge from Blizzard's locker is the Demon Hunter, a new class of character for Diablo III that dedicates her life to slaying demons. The concept artists at Blizzard have dug into the character's role to design their heroine. "There are a lot of sharp shapes – it almost looks like the armour is carved from demon parts," says Christian of his new swift, wiry character concept. "She's just straight-up cool," remarks Jason more directly.

Initial art for Diablo III caused controversy among the game's fans: too colourful, were "We like to do things a little more boldly. We like to stylise things, so that they communicate the idea of what they are," says Christian.

the complaints. The Demon Hunter design, and much more, is a rebalancing act.

"She's definitely our darkest, most sinister class and she gets her hands dirty," says Jason. "That turned out to be the right medicine for what they wanted."

It's clear from such commitment that Blizzard respects its fans and constantly keeps track of public opinion and fan art for inspiration. "We'd be lost without that kind of community connection," says Christian, before Jason chips in: "I have fan art as my desktop because it's so good."

Find out more about the Demon Hunter and Diablo III at **us.blizzard.com/diablo3**.

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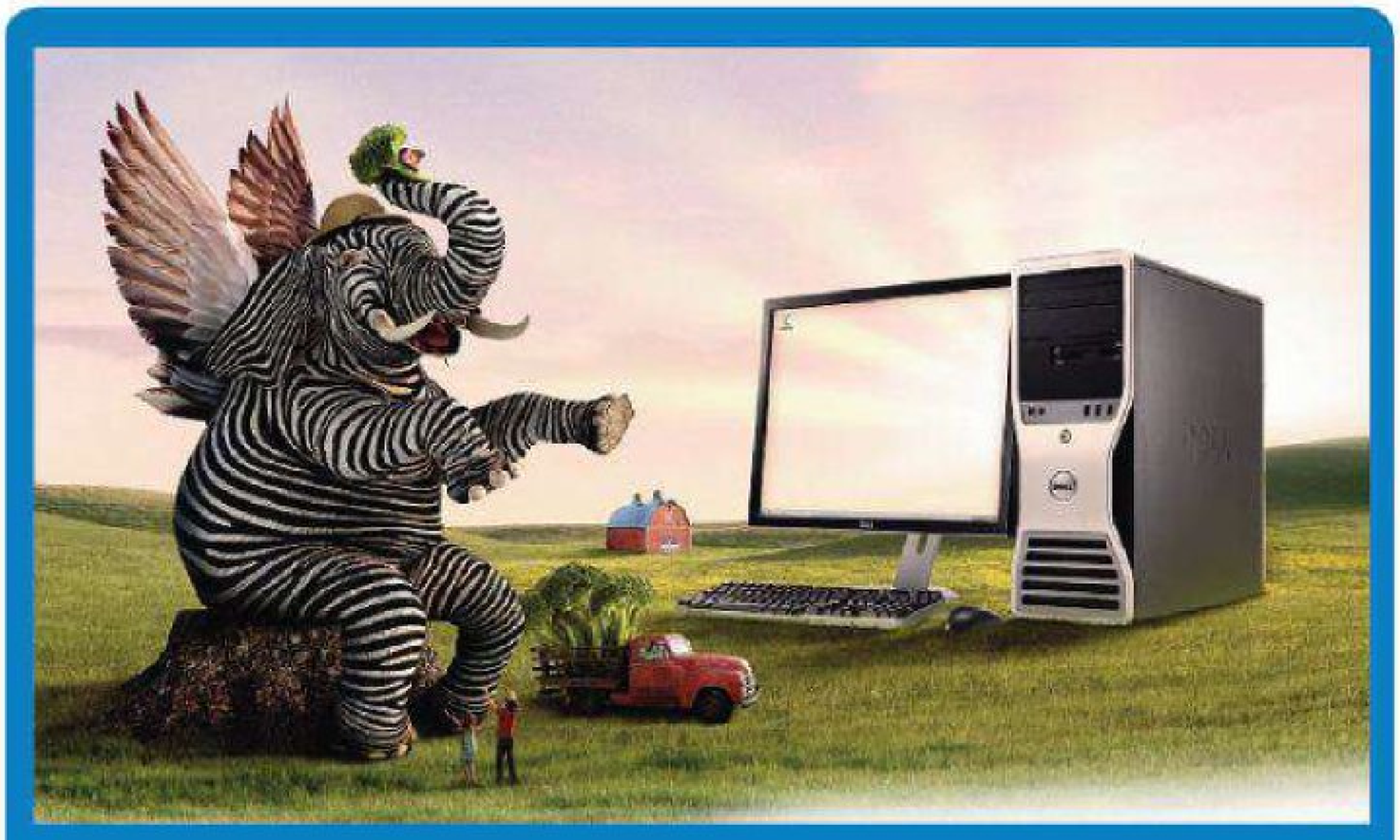
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deviantART

+deviantWATCH

Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART...



Kerem Beyit

kerembeyit.deviantart.com

This site is replete with exquisite fantasy art, with Karem's official artwork for Paizo's role-playing game Pathfinder sharing space with eye-catching book covers and equally impressive fan art for his favourite titles. There are few artists we've seen that can instil a dragon with this much charisma.



Soheil Danesh Eshraghi

soheildanesh.deviantart.com

This Iranian artist's interests may be displayed as 'movies, swimming, and girls!' but he's also quite a dab hand at creating dynamic, barbarian warrior characters. Delve deeper and his style broadens and subjects expand to cover film concepts, comics, environments and even Alice in Wonderland.



Evan Campbell

evancampbell.deviantart.com

Evan Campell's masterly modelling will provide plenty of inspiration, but it may also leave you with lingering nightmares. You have been warned! He creates and paints his sculptures, and you really do need to see them to believe the skill and precision involved, and appreciate the artistry on display.

The old Fuji camera that goes almost everywhere with me. It was an eBay bargain.

The high-tech sock I use to cover my web cam when not in use. Paranoid? Who, me? Naaah!

I'll use this spotlight to dazzle any aliens who try and abduct me. If only it didn't take so long to charge...



A couple of wind-up torches. Essential for those inevitable trips under the desk to sort out PC issues and find items that I've temporarily misplaced.

ImagineFX Artist in Residence

Nick Harris

Organised chaos Nick lets us poke around his artistic hovel, introducing us to his wealth of art books and Pablo the Rat



It won't take you a million years to spot that I'm not the tidiest of chaps – at least in my own space. My eight-feet square studio has two walls lined with books that I've collected over the years (24 in this space), making allowances for a door and my desk to fit in. They feed both reference and inspirational needs, containing all sorts from anatomy to world furniture, from Raphael to Paul Bonner.

I run two systems independently to spare my workhorse unit from the rigors of defending itself against internet nasties. That's in response to suffering several debilitating infections in the past, despite supposedly decent defences. Of course, that doesn't help physically with the clutter. Two Wacoms (both eBay purchases), an A4 and

Just some of the fantasy, reference and anatomy books I keep in my studio. There are at least the same number again in my loft.



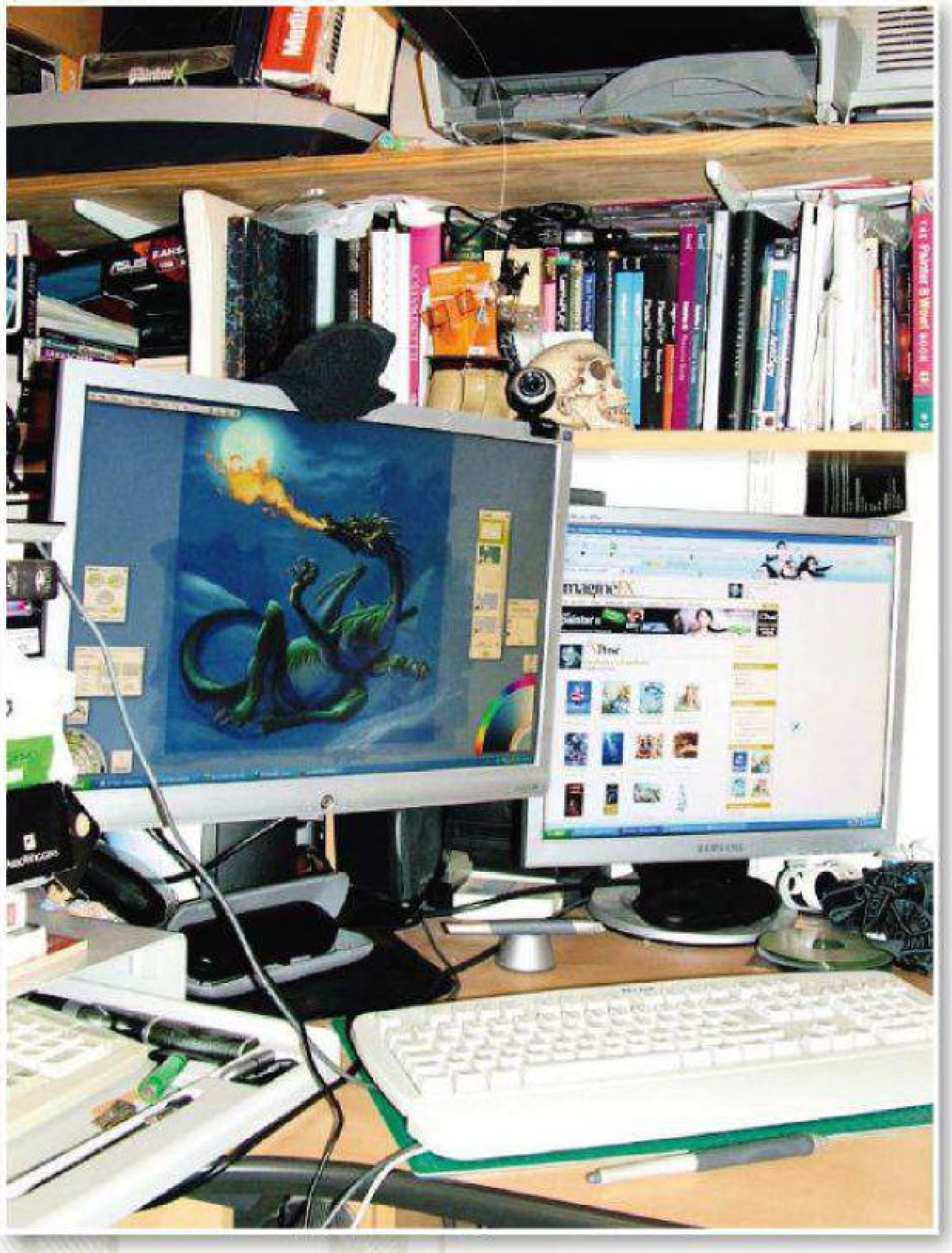
A5 Intuos 3 that I like to use on my lap, face whichever screen is appropriate. The desk is a biggie but still tight for two monitors and keyboards. That's not helped by my tendency to have books, urgent mail, spare spectacles and anything else I need there too. Pablo the rat watches me work and isn't impressed. From his glass case next to me he heckles my total immersion in digital, always heading towards my stock of dust-covered real media tools on jaunts out and about. Yet I remain happy to work straight in using ArtRage, Sketchbook Pro and occasionally Painter, ignoring the folded animation desk tucked against the wall, just in case.

Yes, it isn't slick in here and it isn't stylish. It reflects my grasshopper mind and provides battlements of books for me to hide behind while I create my own versions of ivory towers.

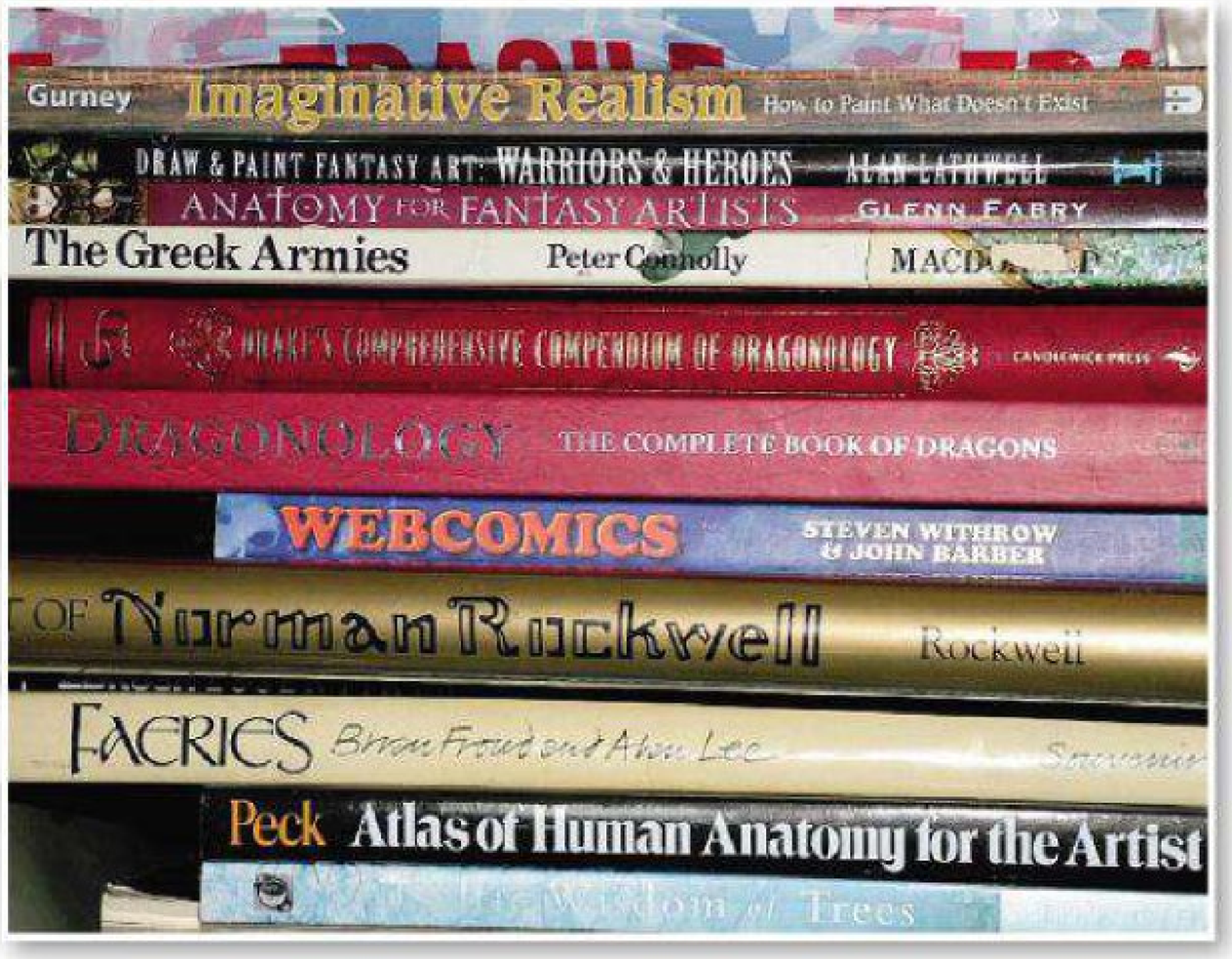
Nick is a UK-based illustrator and a longstanding contributor to ImagineFX. See more of his artwork here: www.nickillus.com.

More of my books. They reflect the various projects I've needed references for over the past 30 years.

I draw with my A4 Wacom Intuos3 while facing this screen. I rest the tablet on my lap – there isn't much desk real-estate available at the moment...



I run two PCs in my studio, and I keep my primary one – with the larger monitor – offline to protect it from net nasties.



In short...

The latest news in brief for digital artists

uDraw **UK**

Nintendo's uDraw GameTablet was released in March in the UK, opening the world of graphic tablets to a whole new demographic. Aimed at children, the Wii console addition is used for gaming and digital art. Some art competitions are starting up here: **www.worldofudraw.com**.



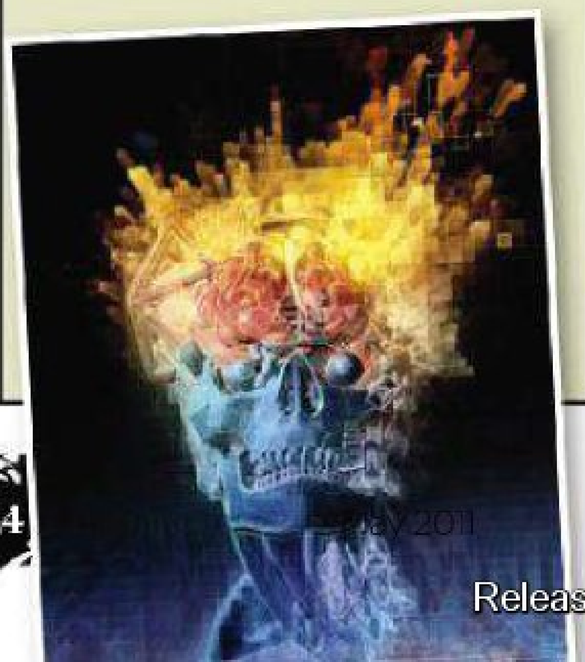
Batman **Mini-series**

Game concept artist Carlos D'Anda, who worked on Batman: Arkham Asylum and Arkham City, is providing the art for a new mini-series this May. The title fills in the story between the two Batman games. Get the latest: **www.dccomics.com**.



Dream **Online**

With art and photography augmenting users' dream diaries, Dreamcatcher.net has opened up shop. Have a peep into the mind of artist Android Jones now: **www.dreamcatcher.net/android**.



Life is Humiliation

by Matt Boyce



Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable

"When I'm painting with the iPad, it doesn't really feel as if I'm working. I become less concerned about deadlines."

Mathieu Reynès's iPad can be set to Chillax mode. Prospective employers take note… *See page 88*

Going to the Golden State

Big break We speak to an artist on the cusp of entering the digital film art industry full-time – he already has a film credit to his name

Having recently secured his first job in the movie industry, working on the film March of the Dinosaurs for Modus FX in Montreal, Simon Weaner is now setting his sights on America.



"Since getting the job, my personal goal is now to end up in California and to work with the great people and great companies down there," he tells us.

After teaching himself the art basics back in Canada, Simon took a one-year college course in computer graphics. "It was to make sure," he says, "that what I learned about digital arts, video games and the film industry by myself was good enough to get a foot in the door." And it looks like it was.

With this initial film work under his belt, Simon is now freelancing as he plans the big move down to California. You can follow his career and see more of his art here: **majora28.carbonmade.com.**


"I started this one as a rough sketch a while ago, came back to it and then left it in the closet again. I never really managed to sort of understand it, so I simply let the painting finish itself."


"I've always liked the idea of some guy exploring an old place that hadn't been seen for ages, after some big event. Lots of stories and elements come to mind with that kind of subject."

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The final frontier

Franchise Concept artist Ian Milham reveals how he's opened up the Dead Space sequel

Game franchises may vary, but so far art director Ian Milham is finding work on the latest Dead Space title far easier, having worked on the first title back in 2006.



"Dead Space 2 started in earnest in 2008, and continues in 2011," says the concept artist. "We have enough flexibility in our universe to go almost anywhere and make it look however we want." With the franchise's foundation under him and his team, they don't have to do as much searching for new ideas as they would have were they starting from scratch.

"Ten to 12 hours is a long time in a brown spaceship," says Ian, of the first game.

The big change to Dead Space 2 is the diverse locations and environments. "Ten to 12 hours is a long time to spend in a brown spaceship," says Ian of the first game. "From that we moved DS2 into schools, hospitals and malls, always giving it a twist, a bit of imagination."

Dead Space 2 is available for PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 and Microsoft Windows and has a multiplayer mode. Look out for more info on the game at: **www.deadspace.ea.com**.





"We have enough flexibility to go almost anywhere and make it look however we want."

Win! TRON: Legacy and Monsters

Competition Win a copy of TRON: Legacy and Monsters on DVD and Blu-ray

Here's your chance to watch TRON: Legacy and Monsters in the comfort of your own home. We've got three DVDs and three Blu-rays of each film, which by our maths means there are 12 shiny discs up for grabs.

To enter this competition, just answer the following question:

What Hollywood actor stars in both the 1982 original TRON and its sequel, TRON: Legacy?

A Tom Cruise
B Elle Macpherson
C Jeff Bridges

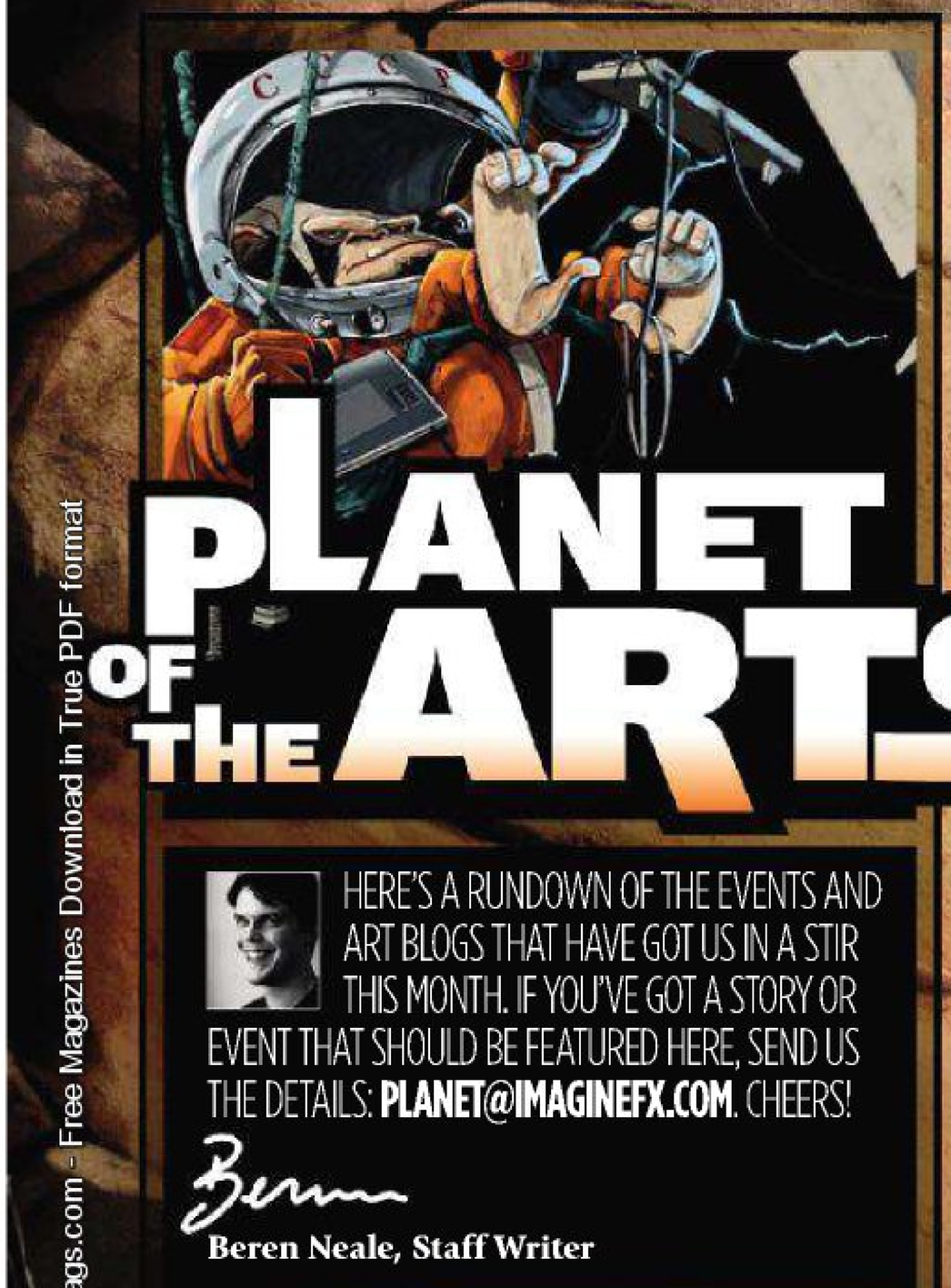


Got to **www.futurecomps.co.uk/tron-monsters**, select your answer and specify your preference for either DVD or Blu-ray. Competition closes 5 June 2011. For a full set of competition rules go to **www.imaginefx.com/comp_rules**.

Competition rules By taking part in a Competition, you agree to be bound by the Competition Rules which can be viewed in full at www.imaginefx.com/comp_rules. Late or incomplete entries will be disqualified. Proof of posting shall not be deemed proof of delivery. Entries must be submitted by an individual and, unless otherwise stated, are limited to one per household. The Competition is open to all who are 18 years and over, except: (i) employees of Future Publishing and its group companies and any members of their households, and (ii) any party involved in the Competition, or any member of their households.



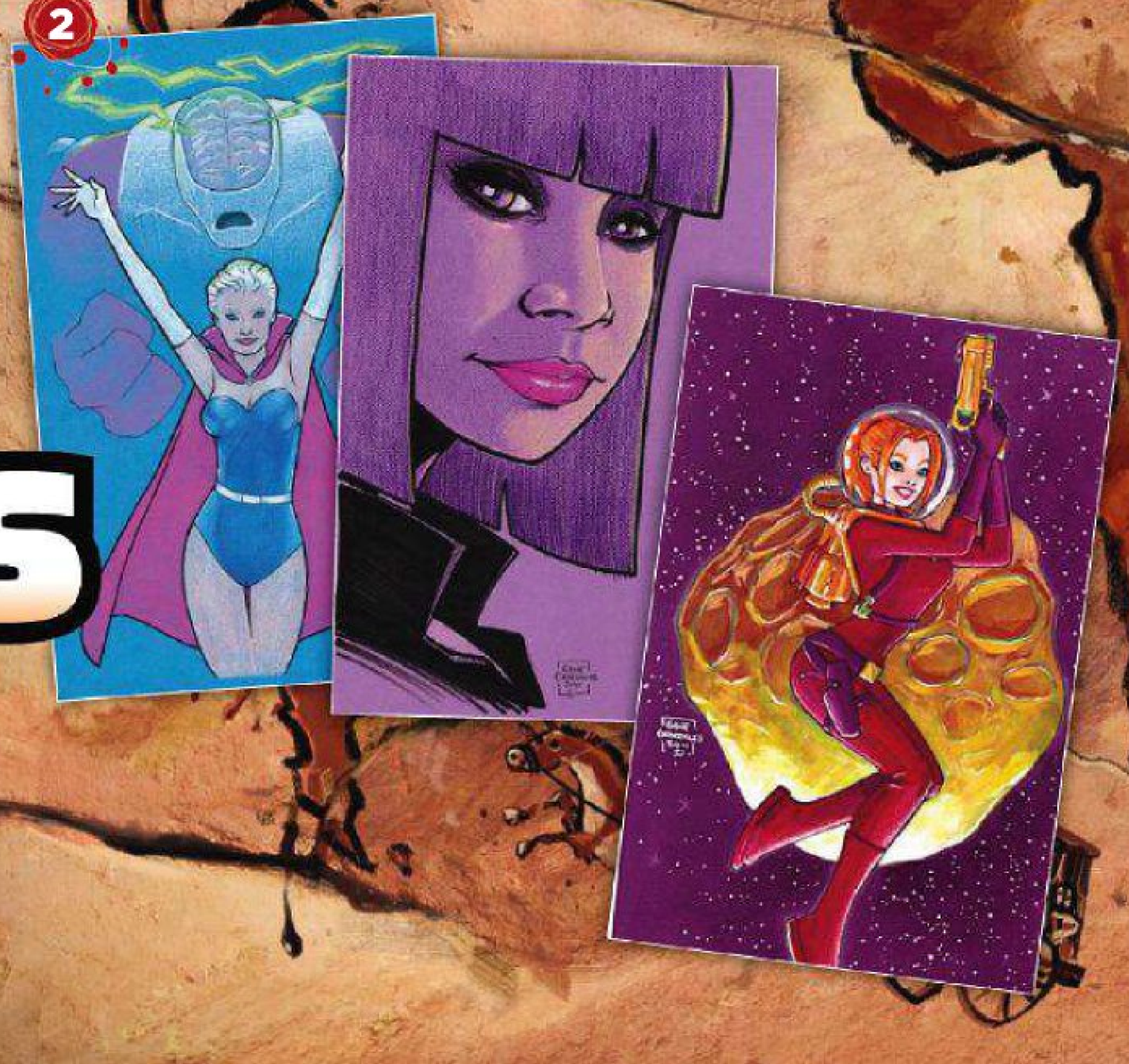




PLANET OF THE ARTS

HERE'S A RUNDOWN OF THE EVENTS AND ART BLOGS THAT HAVE GOT US IN A STIR THIS MONTH. IF YOU'VE GOT A STORY OR EVENT THAT SHOULD BE FEATURED HERE, SEND US THE DETAILS: **PLANET@IMAGINEFX.COM**. CHEERS!

Beren Neale, Staff Writer



ALINA CHAU

Illustrator | US

1 3D Lucasfilm story artist by day, children's illustrator and comic artist by night. Here you'll find Alina's drawings from memory and work updates, all with bags of character.

alinanimation.blogspot.com

GENE GONZALES

Cartoonist | US

2 Gene has produced illustration for children's books, education books and comic art, but he still finds the time to regularly update this blog with lovely drawings and sketches.

www.genegonzales.blogspot.com

ANDREAS ROCHA

Matte painter | Portugal

3 Andreas's paintings are precise and technically accomplished, but the character he infuses in them is from his love of fantasy and sci-fi. Dramatic, sweeping vistas abound.

www.andreasrocha.com

GURMUKH SINGH PANESAR

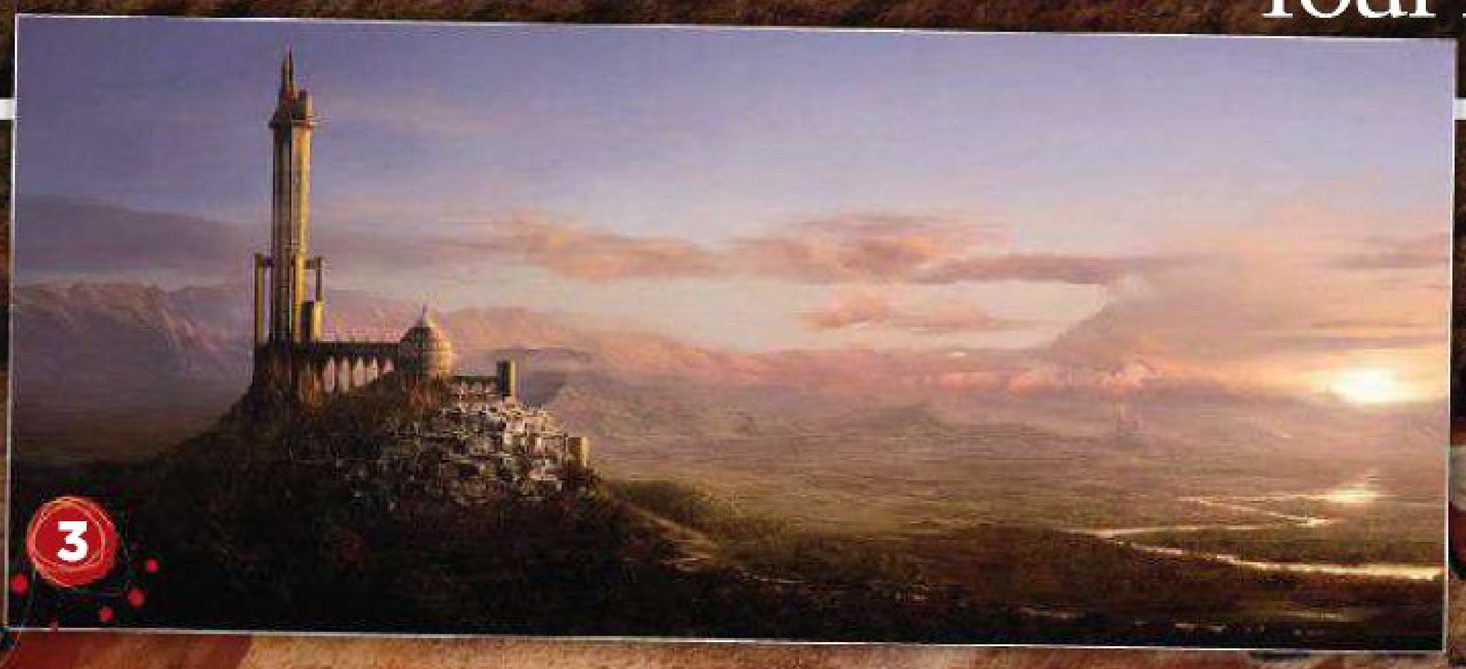
Designer | Kenya

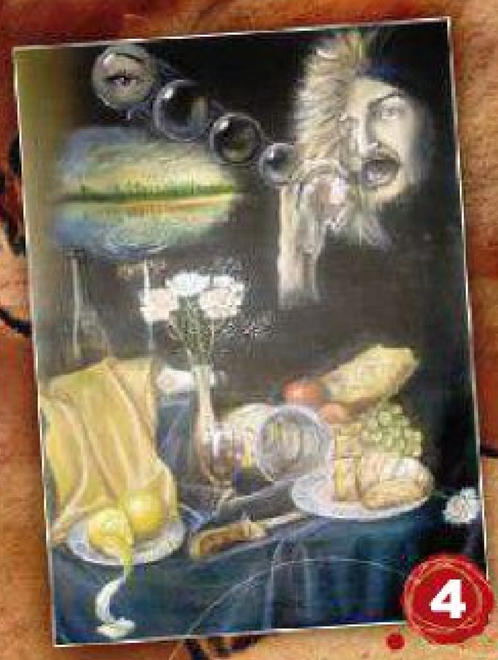
4 From futuristic architecture to personal 2D digital paintings and atmospheric photography, Gurmukh's site is inspirational. His 'miscellaneous CG' section is worth a look, too.

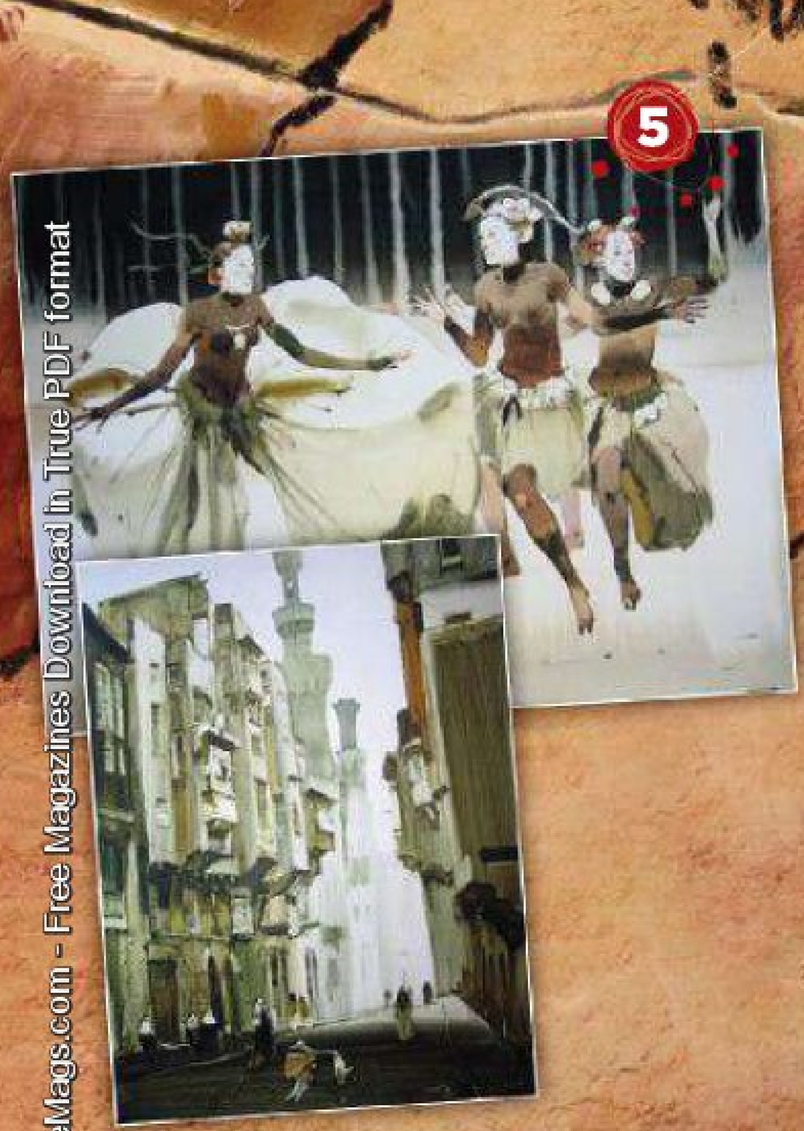
www.grasp.tk

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Release: StoreMags & FantaMag









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VOTSMUCH
Illustrator | Russia

5 Although this Russian site doesn't translate well into English, the beautiful, stylised illustrations do all the talking. This is a Russia from another age that's utterly compelling.
bit.ly/YifDF

WENJUN LIN
Concept artist | China

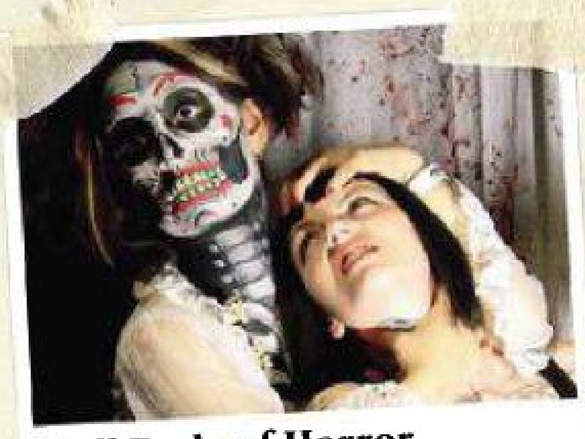
6 Specialising in dynamic, super-detailed war scenes and clean, glistening female heroines, Wenjun's blog is also home to his many sketches and street photography.
blog.sina.com.cn/junc0520

Map art by Jonny Duddle, www.duddlebug.com

Release: StoreMags & FantaMag

SKETCH JAM

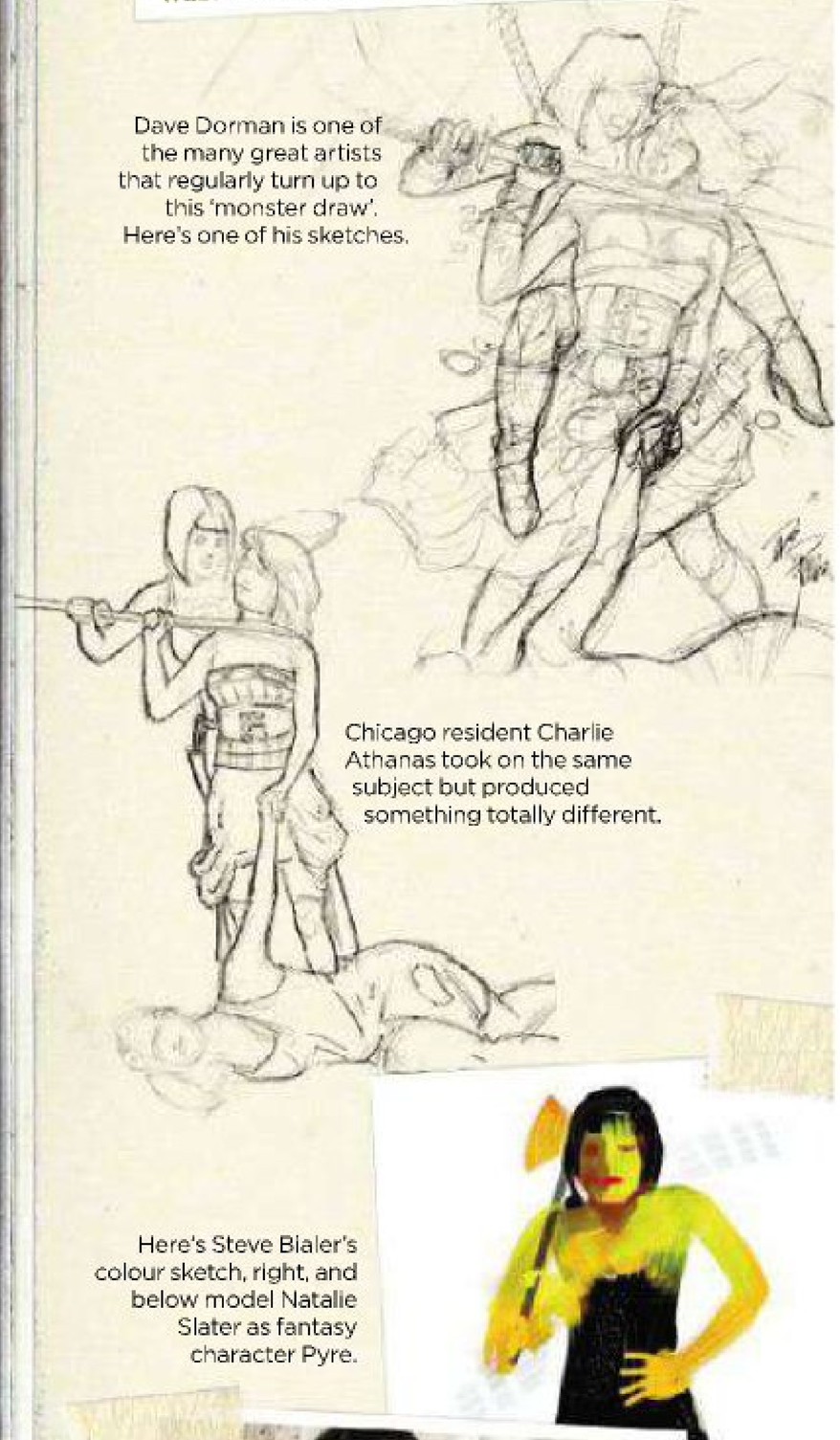
Beasts and barbarians square off in front of talented Chicago artists…



Full Body of Horror Monster Draw

LOCATION: Lucky Number Grill, 931 N. Milwaukee, Chicago
WHEN: Quarterly, fourth Friday of the month
WEB: www.bodyofhorror.blogspot.com

Dave Dorman is one of the many great artists that regularly turn up to this 'monster draw'. Here's one of his sketches.



Chicago resident Charlie Athanas took on the same subject but produced something totally different.

Here's Steve Bialer's colour sketch, right, and below model Natalie Slater as fantasy character Pyre.



Designs for life



designstudio press

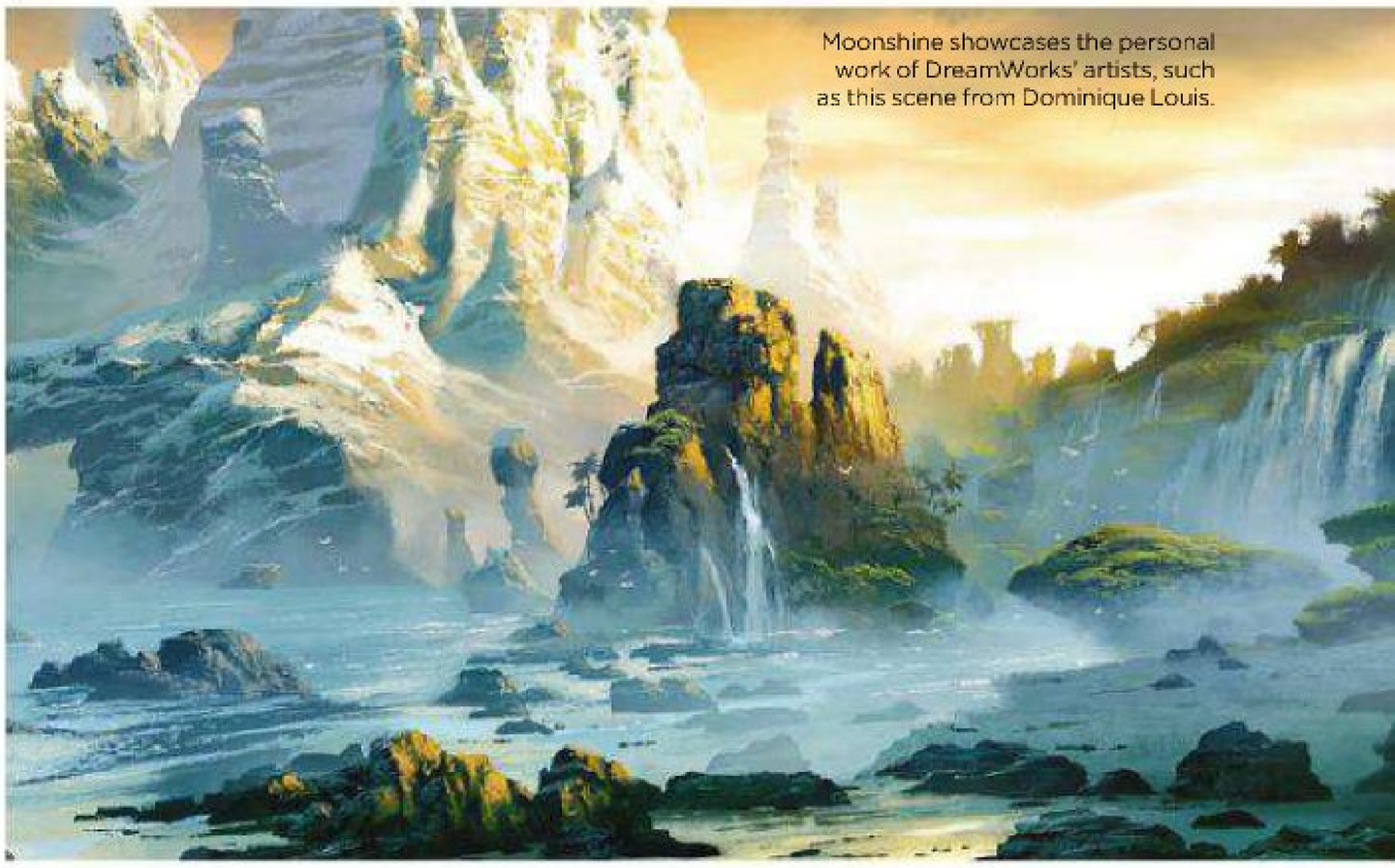
Magnificent seven Titan Publishing brings seven new Design Studio Press books to the UK



Founded by Scott Robertson to bring the world of concept art a little closer while inspiring sci-fi and fantasy artists to improve, collaborate and share knowledge, California's Design Studio Press is one of a kind.

This month, Titan Books has announced that it's signed up to publish seven new books from Design Studio Press in the UK. These include Sentury II, the new book from Syd Mead; Moonshine, an inspirational book showcasing the personal paintings of DreamWorks' artists; and Animals: Real and Imagined by esteemed creature designer Terryl Whitlatch.

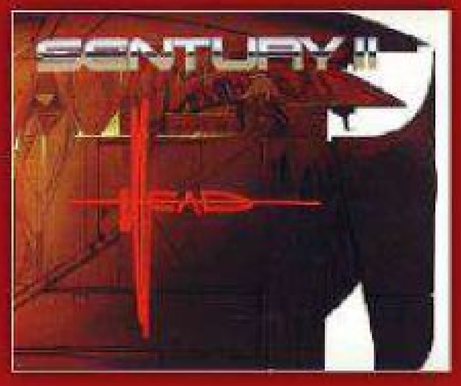
Although Terryl is widely known for her work on the Star Wars movies, designing the many imagined creatures of George Lucas's universe, she also works in zoos and museums studying animal movement and anatomy. "What is the most magical thing to me about animals is to take and portray them at their own terms – not poster child, contrived gestures, but their own, and the infinite ways they arrange their anatomies in the most elegant and amazing poses," says the artist. Her book is a glimpse into her passion for wildlife and her philosophy on drawing animals.



Moonshine showcases the personal work of DreamWorks' artists, such as this scene from Dominique Louis.

THE NEW BOOKS

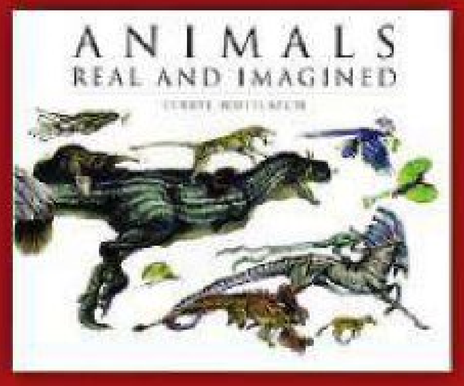
Titan delivers the goods with its latest batch of visionary art



Sentury II

Author **Syd Mead**

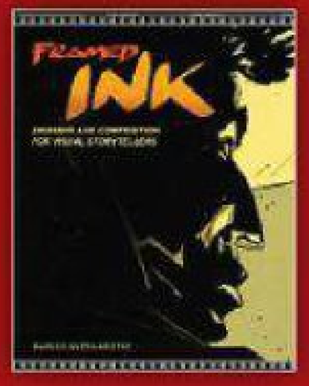
Syd Mead is the legendary visual futurist behind Blade Runner and TRON. His latest book collects illustrations from film, movie and architectural projects with insightful comment.



Animals: Real and Imagined

Author **Terryl Whitlatch**

Considered one of the best animal artists working today, Terryl Whitlatch's book bursts with boundless imagination. Here she shares her vast knowledge of anatomy and animal movement.



Framed Ink

Author **Marcos Mateu-Mestre**

Whether you want to learn storyboarding or graphic novel layouts, Marcos Mateu-Mestre's Framed Ink is a unique insight into how to compose visual storytelling through step-by-step tutorials.



Battle Milk 2

Authors **Various (Wayne Lo, Thang Lee, Jackson Sze)**

Artists behind Star Wars: The Clone Wars provide a rewarding collection of workshops that span a variety of techniques, styles and subjects, including miniature photography and digital art.



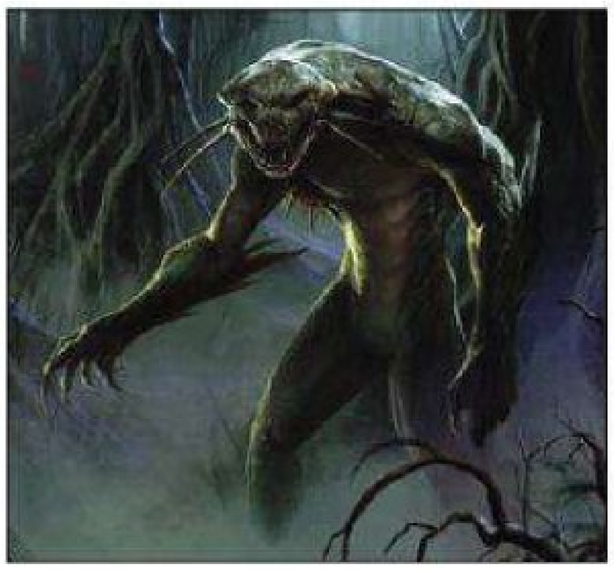
After putting down pens on Madagascar, How to Train Your Dragon and Shrek, DreamWorks artists such as Simon Rogers paint for pleasure in Moonshine.

THE LO DOWN

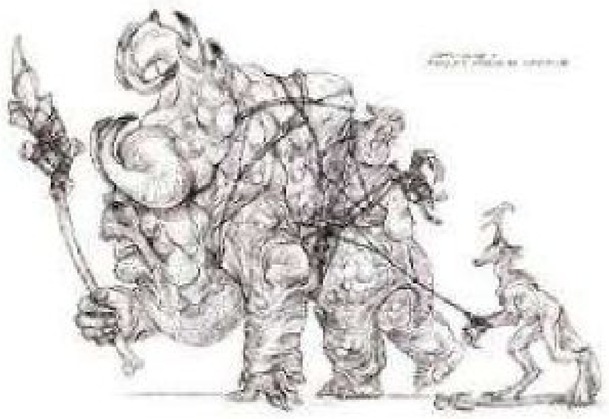
Another standout book in the series is Battle Milk 2, which covers concept art and has been created by a team of six artists behind the Star Wars: The Clone Wars TV series. Uniquely, the book doesn't simply focus on digital painting, but also covers pen and ink drawing and miniature photography to offer workshops free from art direction, designed simply to inspire.

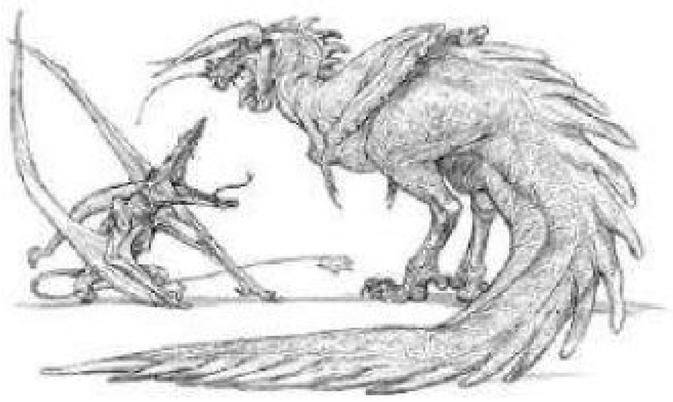
"We'd been sharing our work consistently through the whole process, so we would see a couple of really cool new images from each artist every few days or weeks," says Battle Milk 2 contributor Wayne Lo as he describes the thrill of creating the book. "The variety of contrasting and complementary images from all six artists jumped out at you page after page, from start to finish! Experiencing that visual richness for the first time was definitely fun!"

Wayne Lo shows how to create his Swamp Creature using photo-textures in Battle Milk 2.



fiordkeef.com

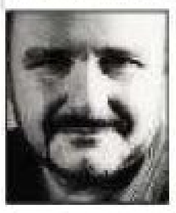




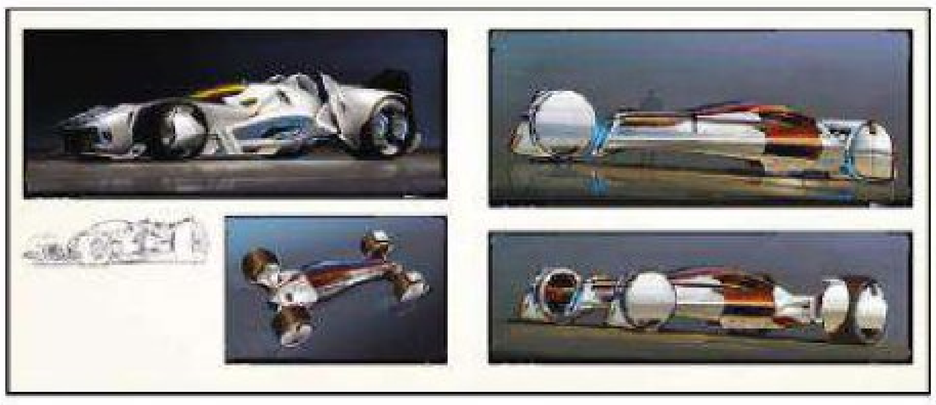
The beautiful sketches by Terryl Whitlatch in Animals: Real and Imagined include eye-opening insights into anatomy and movement.



Whereas Battle Milk 2 offers a chocolate box of creativity, Framed Ink, written by renowned storyboard and film concept artist Marcos Mateu-Mestre, aims to answer the question "How important is storytelling to art?" through the use of step-by-step chapters that cover composing narrative in a single image, storyboarding films and dynamic graphic novel panelling.



Featuring a dazzling array of vehicle designs, including these extreme racing cars, Drive is a must-have for petrol-heads.



"Everything within an image needs to have a meaning and a purpose," says Marcos when quizzed on what readers will learn from Framed Ink. "These intentions have to be clear in the artist's mind and by the time the pencil touches the paper we should have our targets so well identified that our lines just voice out those ideas. Framed Ink will demonstrate how to use every artistic device available to achieve all these goals."

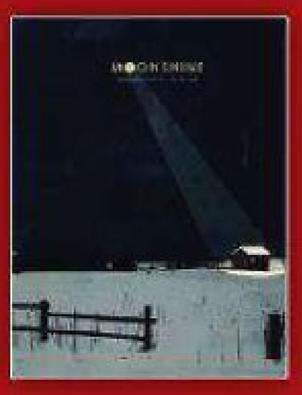
DRIVE TIME

Overall, this collection of books is the work of one man, Scott Robertson, who set up Design Studio Press to bring together artists and inspire others. "For me, teaching at its best is like sharing a secret answer to a question that someone had been searching for, for a very long time," says Scott, whose own book Drive features skillfully created vehicle sketches and renderings, aided by his entertainment design students from Art Center College of Design, Daniel Gardner and Annis Naeem.



Collaboration and inspiration are the watchwords of Design Studio Press, and these seven new books, being distributed by Titan, represent the best of this ideal. Whether you want to master storytelling, vehicle design or just be wowed by stunning imaginary of creatures and other worlds, there's something here for you.

All of these books are available at good bookstores and online retailers or via www.titanbooks.com/dsp.



Moonshine

Authors **Various (45 DreamWorks artists and animators)**

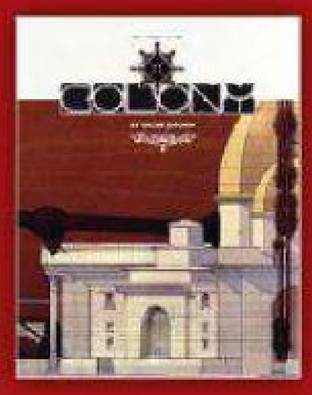
Moonshine is an inspirational collection of personal paintings, both traditional and digital, from leading film and animation artists that offers fresh and fun images across a dazzling array of styles and techniques.



Drive

Authors **Scott Robertson, Daniel Gardner, Annis Naeem**

As well as running Design Studio Press, Scott Robertson is also author of a number of design books, Drive is his latest. Covering the full gambit of car concepts from sports to military uses, this is essential reading.



The Story of the Colony

Author **Viktor Antonov**

This latest book by Viktor Antonov, the BAFTA award-winning art director and novelist, is a mesmerising blend of novel and illustrated book that follows Gabriel Duban's epic journey to discover a lost city.



Framed Ink from film visual artist Marcos Mateu-Mestre explores the fundamentals of composition, layout and character design in visual storytelling across 230 illustrations and 166 diagrams.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

TERRYL WHITLATCH

The painter of beasts real and imaginary talks about her craft

Why do you love painting animals so much?
The short answer is because I love animals. There's something in the marriage of the anatomical form, expression and personality of animals that captivated me from as early as I can remember. From my early childhood it was horses and birds that particularly fascinated me, and although that hasn't changed, the scope has broadened to include all manner of species.

What's a creature designer?
It's an artistic scientist who designs and adapts the depiction of living species, prehistoric species and imaginary creatures inspired by them, for use in the entertainment industry, and academic and scientific institutions.

Was it a big leap to go from real animals to imagined creatures?
Not really. Animals, whether living species or their prehistoric relatives, are the best sources of inspiration for imaginary creatures – it's they that make this jump possible.

What's the best bit of advice you've been given?
To keep moving forward, no matter how discouraged one might feel. Also, to always remain teachable, learn from your mistakes and be ready to learn new things. Another thing I remember is what George Lucas once said: "No one ever built a memorial to a critic." Of course, constructive criticism is always a gift, and an opportunity to grow.

What do you think readers will get from your book?
It's my hope that readers will enjoy the book and be entertained. But more importantly, beyond any inspirational and educational qualities, that the book will share and point out how special – just how very special and precious – the countless animal species that share our lives and world are. Without them, no imaginary animals would ever be possible.



Terryl is a freelance concept artist who specialises in creature design. She came up with the look of Jar Jar Binks.

www.terrylwhitlatch.com

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX Forum

Winners

Image of the month

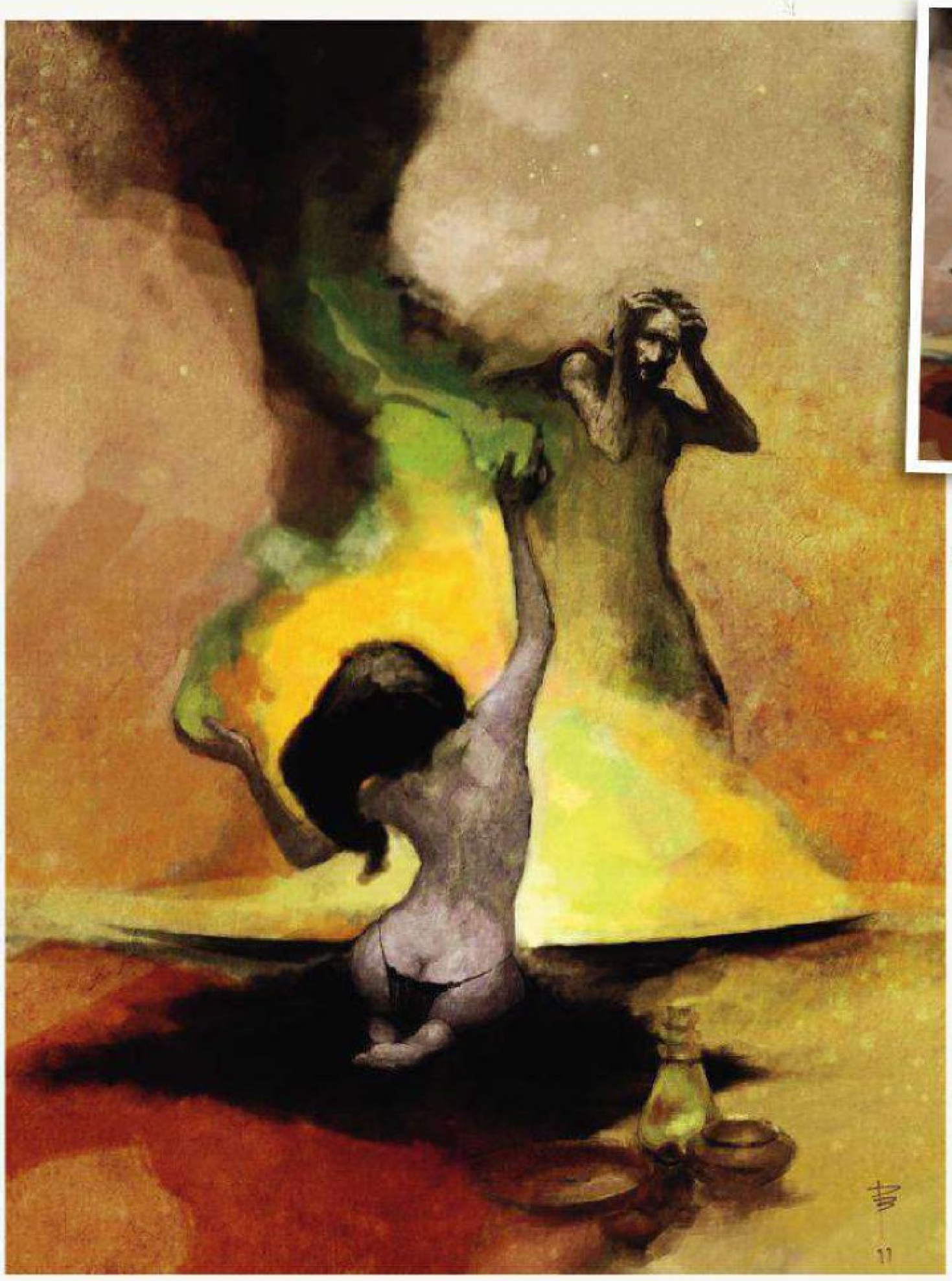
Reflections This month's winning artist has turned in a beautifully evocative piece that hints at the dangers of meddling with necromancy and dark powers...

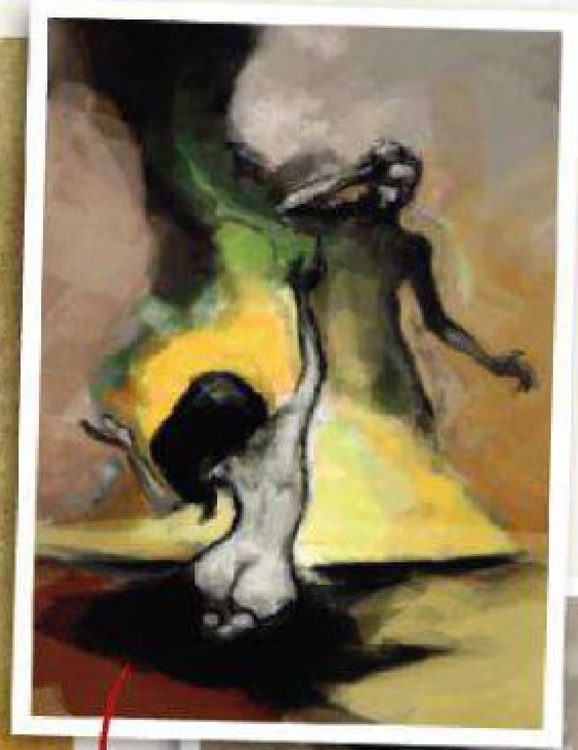


Having tried a pulp cover style that didn't suit his technique, Dave chose a looser approach with a more centralised composition. "I was influenced by two paintings by my late grandmother, Teena Rice," he says. "One of them an abstract, and the other a still life."

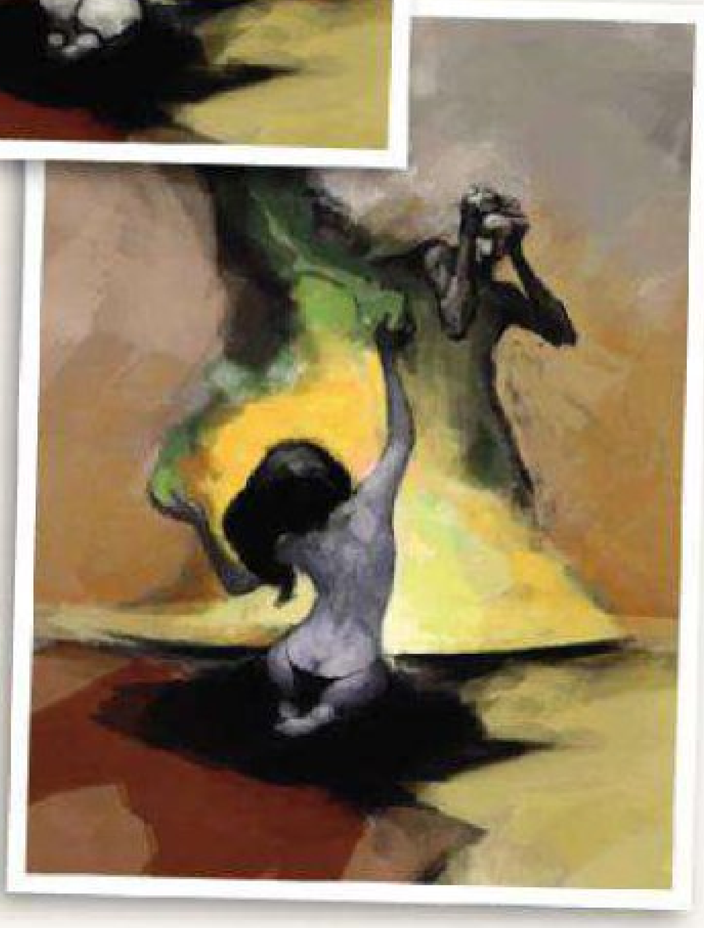
The challenge title made Dave ruminate that knowing your own future is actually a curse: "removing all the surprise from your life. Also, people who visit oracles really just want the good news, right?" This scene depicts the downside – the dangers of consulting oracles and getting back a troubling forecast.

MYFX TITLE: The Shape of Things to Come
WINNER: Dave Brasgalla
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/dave_brasgalla





Dave accentuated the main character's anguish at knowing his future by simply painting him holding his head in his hands.



FORUM CRIT



"The colours are great, the handling is great, but more than anything it has that inevitability and simplicity behind the idea. I can't think of a better way to handle the topic."
Kevin McGrath (kmasgrande)

Join in!
www.imaginefx.com/myfx



MYFX THEME: Mix n' Match Monster Madness
WINNER: Max Hugo (Mhugo)
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/mhugo



"I loved the theme of this challenge, with its almost unlimited possibilities. I wanted my creature to look consistent and tried to avoid what I call the Frankenstein's monster look; the different parts of the various animals needed to blend together seamlessly. So I went with this mix of armadillo lizard, snapping turtle and crab and I'm quite happy with the final result."

MYFX THEME: The Shape of Things to Come
WINNER: Alex Tooth
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/alextoooth

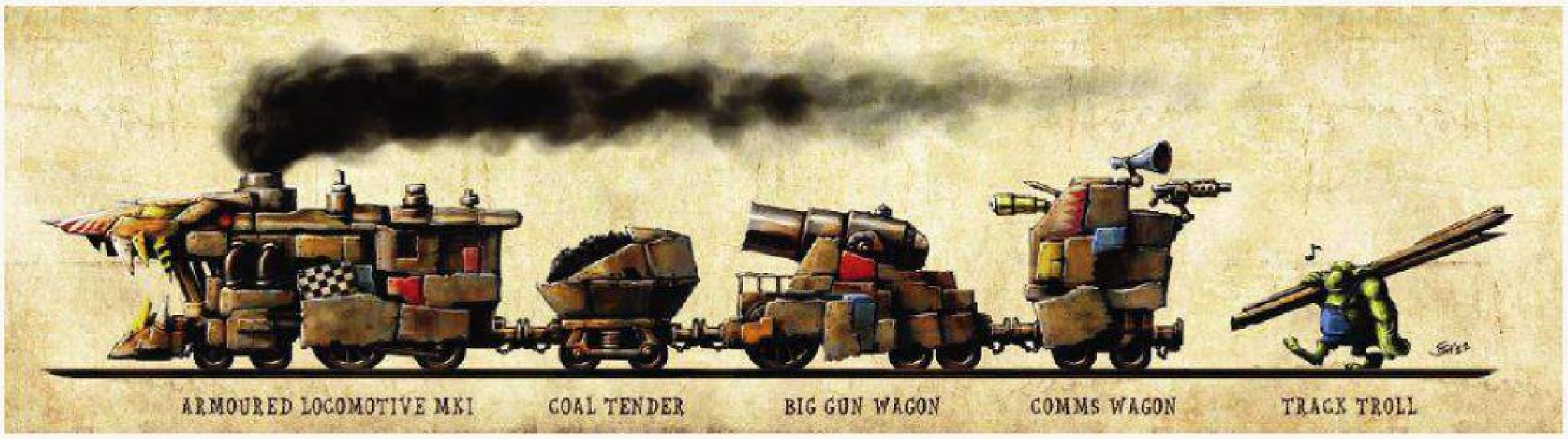


"I was drawn to the challenge title because it conjured magical images in my mind. I wanted to focus on the environment and show a late summer breeze as another year goes by, as the sword passes through the ages."

MYFX THEME: The Goblin War Train
WINNER: Christian Schwager (schwager)
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/schwager



"This was the most fun I've had with a challenge so far. Armoured trains are real passion of mine and the added goblin twist meant that I could go crazy with the design. Loved it!"



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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on claire@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK

Follow us on twitter: www.twitter.com/imaginefx

Tell us your thoughts on: www.facebook.com/imaginefx



It's always good to hear that people like what we're doing – especially when it comes to new versions of the mag, such as our digital version, available through Zinio.

A taste of the East, please

After looking through my friend's subscriber copy of issue 67, I went out and bought it. I've bought issues in the past and have been happy with them, but 67 was by far the best yet – every page was good. Of course, having Adam Hughes was a big push, but Bill Sienkiewicz, Jim Lee, the whole comic thing, fantastic. I also didn't know about Kapow! Comic Con, but I'd like to go to it now.



Murray loved our comic-themed issue 67, featuring a Catwoman cover by Adam Hughes.

I have a suggestion for you: an issue on China and Korea. Benjamin (**blog.sina.com.cn/benjamin**), from China, is my favourite artist, and has done Marvel comic covers and had Orange and Remember published by Tokyopop. Lim Dall Young (**http://milkcow.egloos.com**), from Korea, is also good – his Unbalance X Unbalance and Freezing are very popular in Japan, too.

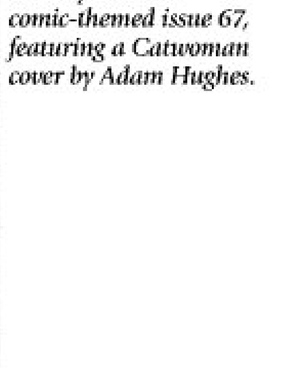
Lastly, I might be a bit late with this tip on using graphics tablets, but I use a MacBook Pro late 2008 model and A4 Aiptek graphics tablet. I hated running over the tablet with the pen, as it felt wrong and wore out the pad and pen nib, but after a friend gave me some advice, it's fine. Just buy a cutting mat, put it over the surface and use that. You can get cutting mats in sizes from A5 to A3, so size isn't a problem. It works! I hope this helps others, too.

Murray Don, via email

Claire replies Thanks for the cutting mat tips, Murray – I'm sure some of our readers will be trying that out. Also, I always love to hear about all of your favourite artists. The Chinese, Korean and Japanese artists can be hard to get hold of and there's usually a language barrier, but I'll look into that list.

Aww, shucks

First off I'd like to congratulate you on the best creative magazine in the whole world!



DID YOU MISS ISSUE 68?

We've still got a few copies, but you need to move fast! See page 57 for details on how to get hold of a copy.

I absolutely love it! You haven't lost me – I just subscribed to the iPad version through the Zinio app. I find it convenient to have your magazine issues with me wherever I take my iPad.

The only thing I would change would be for you to offer a download of your DVD content online with the digital issues for your Zinio subscribers. Oh, and for you to offer your back issues in a digital format! Keep up the good work!

Daryl Thompson, via email

Claire replies Hello Daryl, I'm glad we've not lost you! I'm also glad to hear that you're enjoying our digital issues. We're starting to digitise our back issues with Zinio at **www.zinio.com/imaginefx-single**. We currently have the first seven issues on sale, alongside the addition of our most recent editions. Currently we cannot offer our DVD content. For readers who want to know more about our digital issues, please turn to page 81 for more info.

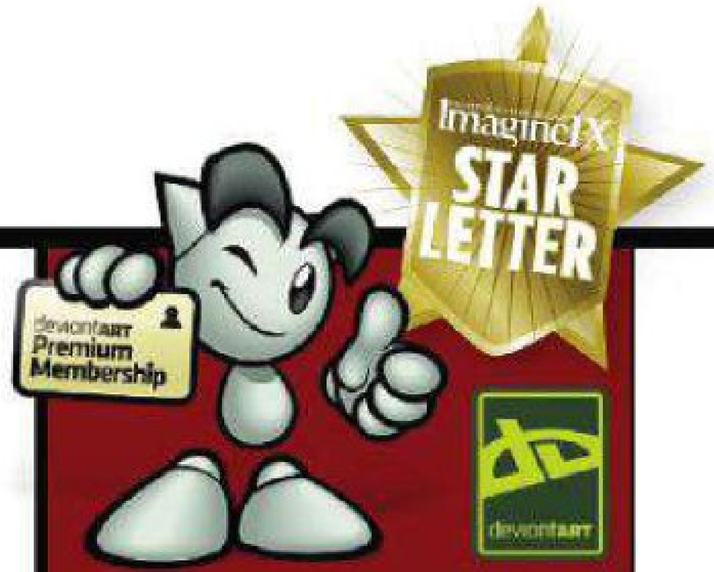
Opportunities for art

I am 54 years old, retired and disabled, but I can still draw – I've been a self-taught sketch artist for a year. I'm currently an inmate in Wisconsin, and a volunteer art teacher came to our facility to teach anyone who was interested to draw. He had a magazine with him: ImagineFX. To say the least, I fell in love!

I'm going back to a college when I get out in August 2011. I'm doing a course in computer graphics, portraits and oil painting, all because of your magazine. I don't feel disabled or old anymore.

Rich, Wisconsin, US

Claire replies Thanks for getting in touch with us, Rich. It's great to hear that art teachers are using our magazine as a way of helping to get people inspired – and it's heartwarming to hear that we've inspired you to go back to college, too. Good luck with your course in August. Let us know how you get on!



Our star letter writer wins a dA Premium Membership!

• Browse more content more quickly • Customise your profile page • Receive exclusive discounts & offers • And more!

Once more unto the breach

I'd just like to write to thank you and the team for all the inspiration that you've given me. I'm 20 years old and I've been an auxiliary nurse since the age of 17. At college, my parents convinced me that although my art was good, there's no money in art and that I should pursue a career in the NHS. I followed my parents' advice and from that day I've felt hollow and cold.

Since buying my first issue of ImagineFX (during college) I've found my inspiration again and I'm currently building a portfolio. I'm also working on my skills as a digital artist. I've also started work on a comic called Children of Osaka.

Thank you all for giving me my taste for art back, and a big thank you to all of the artists who share their knowledge.

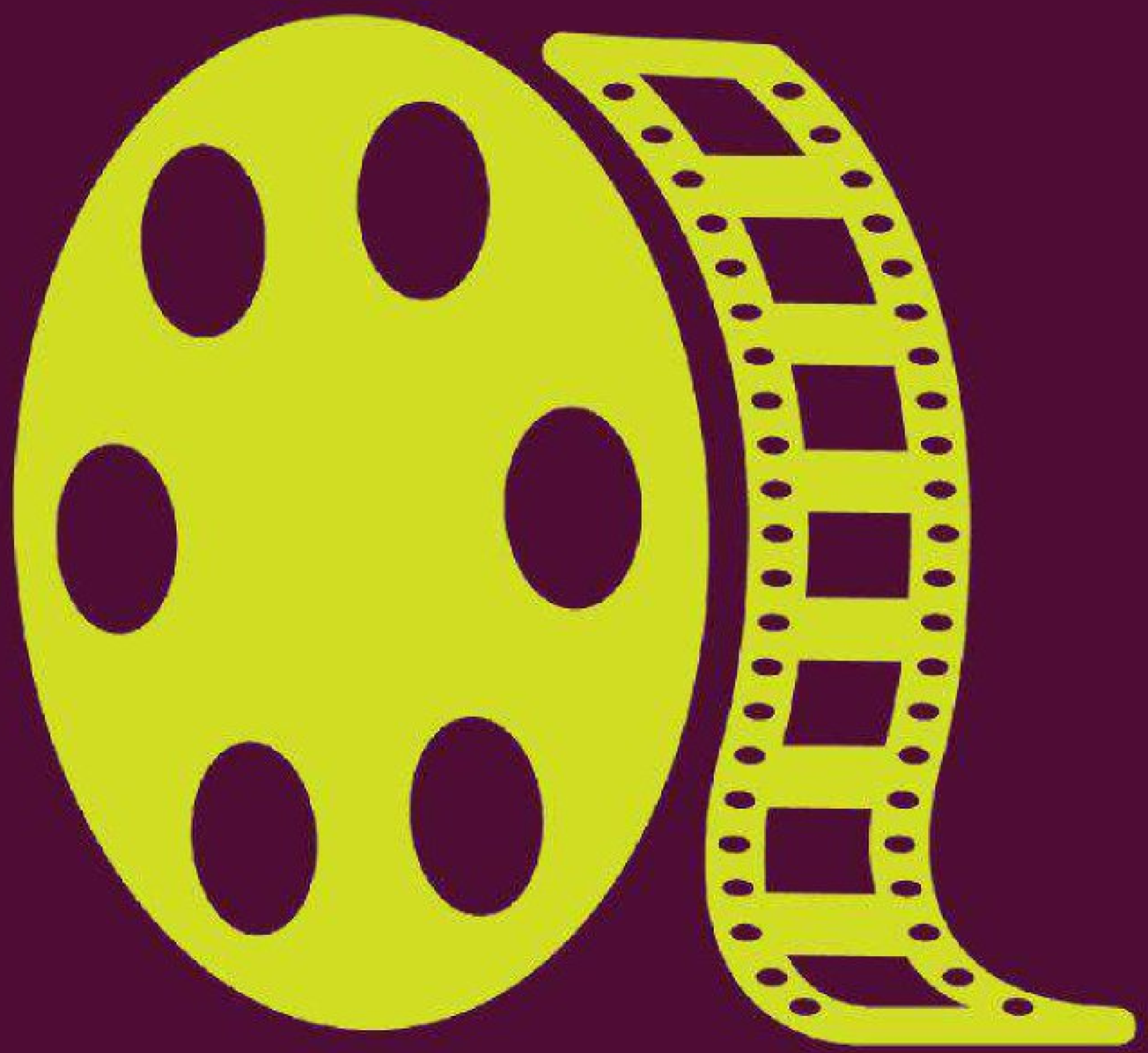
Patrick Marshall, via email

Claire replies Patrick, I'm sure many people out there will identify with this letter. Most of the time our jobs aren't the ones we dream of doing, but ones that we do out of necessity. It's great that you've found your way back to making art, and I look forward to seeing more of your work.



We're really pleased to hear that we've helped Patrick get back into the art world.

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*Source: Global Animation Industry: Strategies, Trends and Opportunities –2009, Animation Age Ghetto –www.tvtropes.com.

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Artists' opinions



"ImagineFX is the best published source of conceptual art information that I have ever seen. The magazine is a must-have investment for any aspiring concept artist who wants to take their skills to the next level."

Andrew Jones, concept artist, Massive Black Inc



"ImagineFX is a unique resource for the science-fiction and fantasy community. It has invaluable tips and techniques for a range of software, and encourages aspiring artists to get their work in print and receive international exposure."

Jonny Duddle, freelance artist

LIVE IN THE US/CANADA? TURN TO PAGE 92

Artist Q&A

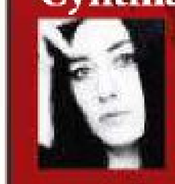
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The ImagineFX panel

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Cynthia Sheppard



Cynthia is a freelance digital artist. With a background in traditional painting, she likes to bring classical techniques to her work on digital canvas.

www.sheppard-arts.com

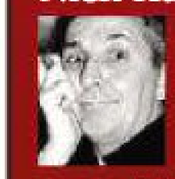
Remko Troost



Born in Amsterdam, Remko is a senior concept artist and illustrator with several years' experience in the film and video game industries.

www.remkotroost.com

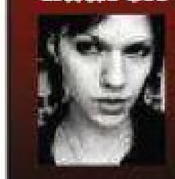
Nick Harris



Gloucestershire-based Nick went digital in 2000 after 18 years' working with traditional methods. He works mainly on children's illustrations.

www.nickillus.com

Lauren K Cannon



Lauren is a freelance fantasy artist who specialises in the surreal. She lives in a small woodland village in New Jersey, US.

www.navate.com

Brynn Metheney



Brynn was raised in the Mojave desert and moved to the Bay Area in 2006. Creature and animal illustrations are her forte.

www.brynnart.com

Tom Bagshaw



Tom is a commercial illustrator whose highly rendered digital painting style has caught the eyes of Saatchi & Saatchi, the BBC and Sony, as well as us!

www.mostlywanted.com

Jonathan Standing



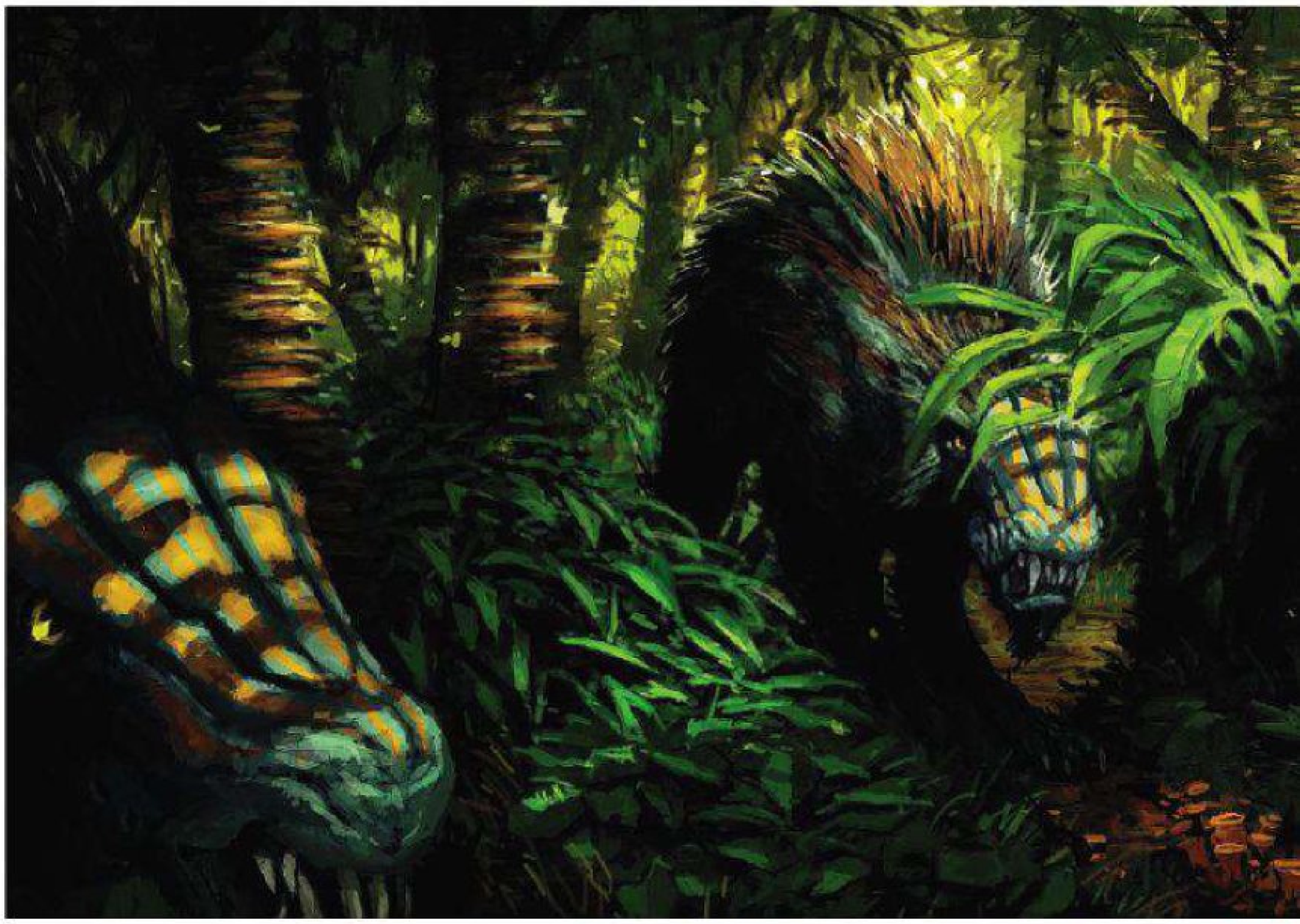
Jonathan is an English artist and illustrator. He's based near Toronto, Canada, and works for a developer in the video games industry.

www.jonathanstanding.com

Question

Is there a quick and easy way to unify the lighting scheme in a painting?

Daryle Warring, US



Answer

Jonathan replies



Ideally, a painting should begin with studies and thumbnails of what your lighting and colour scheme are going to be. The more work you put into this early stage the better, but sometimes the complexity of lighting in an image can get the best of any of us. Luckily, there are a few digital art tricks you can employ to help achieve the effect you're after.

To help unify the contrast and lighting of an image, an Overlay layer of either a gradient or a photograph can be enormously helpful. I usually desaturate the information in an Overlay layer to stop the colours from being changed and then reduce the opacity of the layer (and often the contrast, too) to see what type of effect I can produce.

If you're after a more stylised look then using an Overlay layer of either a gradient or a photo offers a quick way to alter the colour of a painting.

As contrast draws the eye, the opposite is also true and using an Overlay layer to reduce the contrast of an area is an excellent tool for downplaying its impact. Increasing the value of information in your Overlay layer above 50 per cent will in turn give you a lighter tone, meaning that you can also use the overlay layer to add contrast by boosting highlights too.

FloralKeys.com

Step-by-step: How to quickly save a painting



1 I didn't put much planning into this painting when I began and subsequently the lighting in it is scattershot and difficult to keep consistent. I've done a poor job of managing contrast to give the viewer a sense of what the light in the image was doing. It's time to change things.



2 Using a photo of jungle in an Overlay layer I manage to group more of the dark areas of the image and then set the lighter areas between the tree boughs. This immediately makes a difference to the contrast. Using a Quick mask on the layer, I can edit out the information on the layer that I don't need.



3 Using another Overlay layer, this time with a neutral value of 50 per cent and with the saturation set higher, I add an orange-hued light behind the trees. This strengthens the effect of the light that's falling behind the trees being separate from the light which is beneath the canopy. My scene is saved from the Recycle bin!

Question
How do I make an arrow wound look realistic and convincing?
Jamie Mulligan, US



Answer
Brynn replies



While it might be exciting to exaggerate battle wounds with blood spray and gore, you need to keep things simple to make a wound look convincing. When painting an arrow through an extremity, remember that it's a hard object travelling through a soft one. Showing the shape of the arrow's shaft through the skin will help in making it look as though the arrow has travelled through flesh and give it volume.

A strong light-source will help with this. The entry wound should be on the small side. The force of the arrow travelling through the arm would keep things 'tidy' for some time. If you're painting the exit wound you could paint more blood into the piece and make it a bit messier. Here, I've added a small amount of blood as if it were a fresh wound. Time matters most in relation to a wound like this. The longer the wound is left untreated, the more blood will be present.



Thinking about the structure of the arrow's shaft inside the arm will help in making it look like it's actually inside the flesh.

Emphasising the contrast between values and colour will help the flesh look like it's been split open as the arrow has travelled through it. I've also added in some bright highlights to make the blood look wet. It's small details like these that can really help enhance the credibility of the painted wound.

Question
What advice have you got for painting claws and paws?
Kendall Lawson, New Zealand

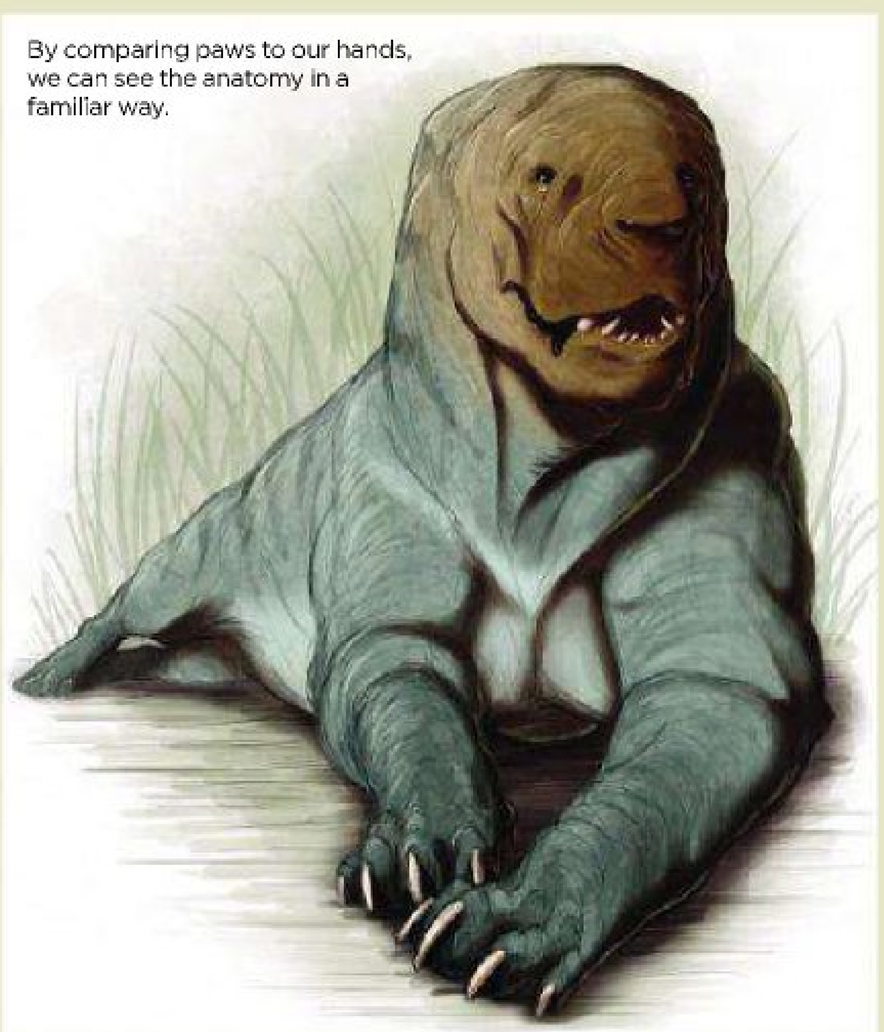
Answer
Brynn replies



Paws and claws can be tough; however, making them believable will solidify your creature design. One of the tricks I use when drawing paws is to think of them like hands – after all, most animal paws are similar in structure to our hands. If you can recognise the proportions in comparison to our own anatomy, then it can be easier to visualise them on paper.

When I begin to draw the paws on my brutish-looking creature I first think of them as a wire frame. This basic structure will help me visualise the paw in a simplified way. It'll also give me clues as to where the bones might lie within the paw itself. This particular creature would walk on her toes, similar to cats and dogs. The pads are where our fingertips would be – the rest of the paw's structure should then fall into place. Thinking, again, that this paw is similar to my own hand will aid in keeping the structure and the proportions right.

When painting paws and claws, it's a good idea to use value to help define where the paws are turning in space. Of course, nothing beats reference. There's photos of course, but looking at actual paws and claws will help tremendously – practise drawing them as much as you can. Either go to the zoo to sketch, or take a look at a cat or dog. Pets can offer a wealth of reference right in your own studio or home.

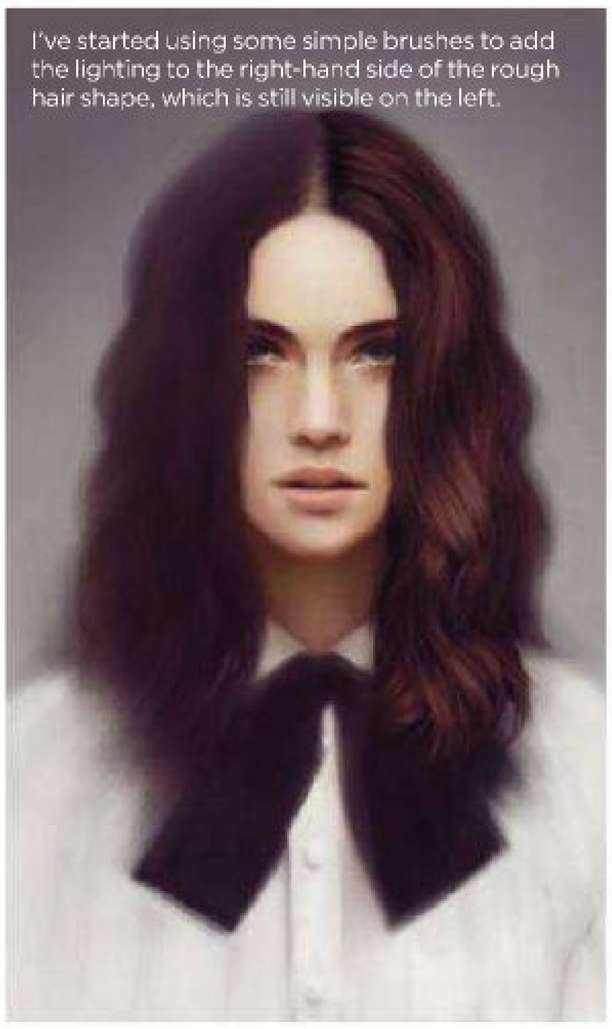


By comparing paws to our hands, we can see the anatomy in a familiar way.

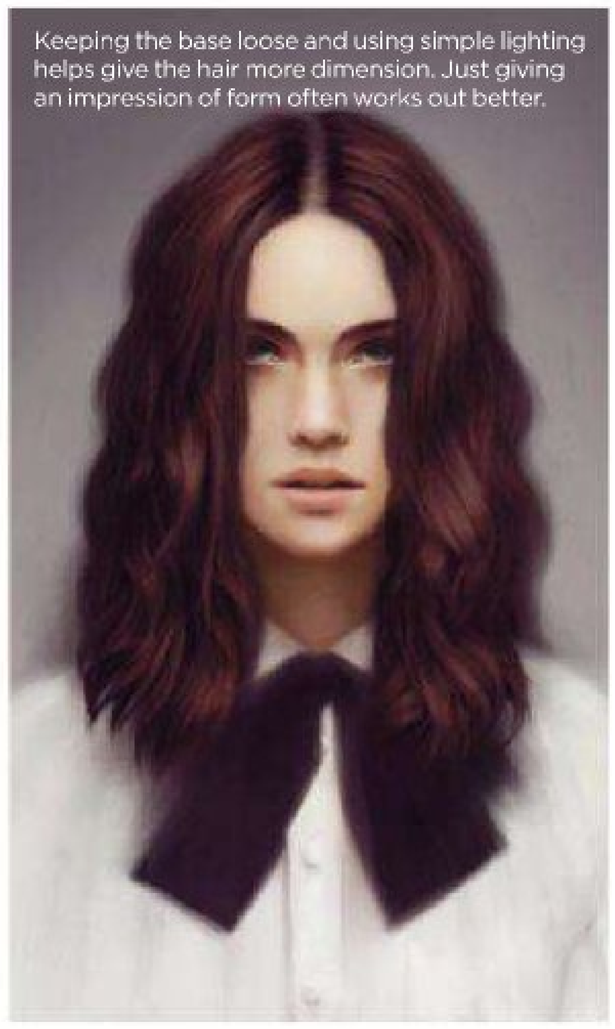


Here, I've used a wire-frame sketch to place where the joints would lie in the paw. This will serve as my guide when drawing the whole paw.

Question
I want to paint realistic, wavy or curly hair – can you give me some help?
Radha Grigoria, Greece



I've started using some simple brushes to add the lighting to the right-hand side of the rough hair shape, which is still visible on the left.



Keeping the base loose and using simple lighting helps give the hair more dimension. Just giving an impression of form often works out better.

Answer
Tom replies



I think the main thing is to look at hair as the pure form, as much as possible. Whether you're aiming for wavy, curly, straight, short or long hair, try and break it down to a basic shape and have a style in mind. Start out with a simple shape in a mid-tone, then add in highlights and lowlights where light would hit or create shadow. It's then a simple matter of refining each stage. In this example I've used Painter to create the base portrait and mid-tone of the hair, then started building the form up on the right-hand side, using separate layers for the highlights and lowlights, softening out some of the harsher lines as I go. The main thing to remember is to let the lighting help shape the hair and don't get bogged down by trying to add every single strand.

Question
Can you give me some help on painting a starlit vista?
Lukasz Majerski, Poland

Answer
Lauren replies



This is one of those deceptive subjects that seems simple enough at first glance, but needs proper attention to appear realistic. To give the stars the variety they need you don't need special brushes, just some patience.

The biggest mistake that people make with stars is painting them too uniformly – whether it's brightness, size, placement or even colour. Stars are neither placed evenly in the sky, nor are they highly visible. When you look at the sky, at first only the brightest stars are obvious. However, the longer you stare up at the night sky, the more you notice small, faint stars. In a painting, these faint stars can do a lot to fill the blank spaces between the stars acting as focal points.

In space, stars are different colours, depending on how hot they are. This isn't obvious to the naked eye, but introducing subtle hue variation into a starlit painting will add a lot of depth to your night sky. A mix of pastel blues, yellows and purples, instead of limiting yourself to white, will bring an extra level of richness to the final painting.

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Question
What's the best way to go about painting a table of decaying food?
Esme Giles, England

Answer
Nick replies

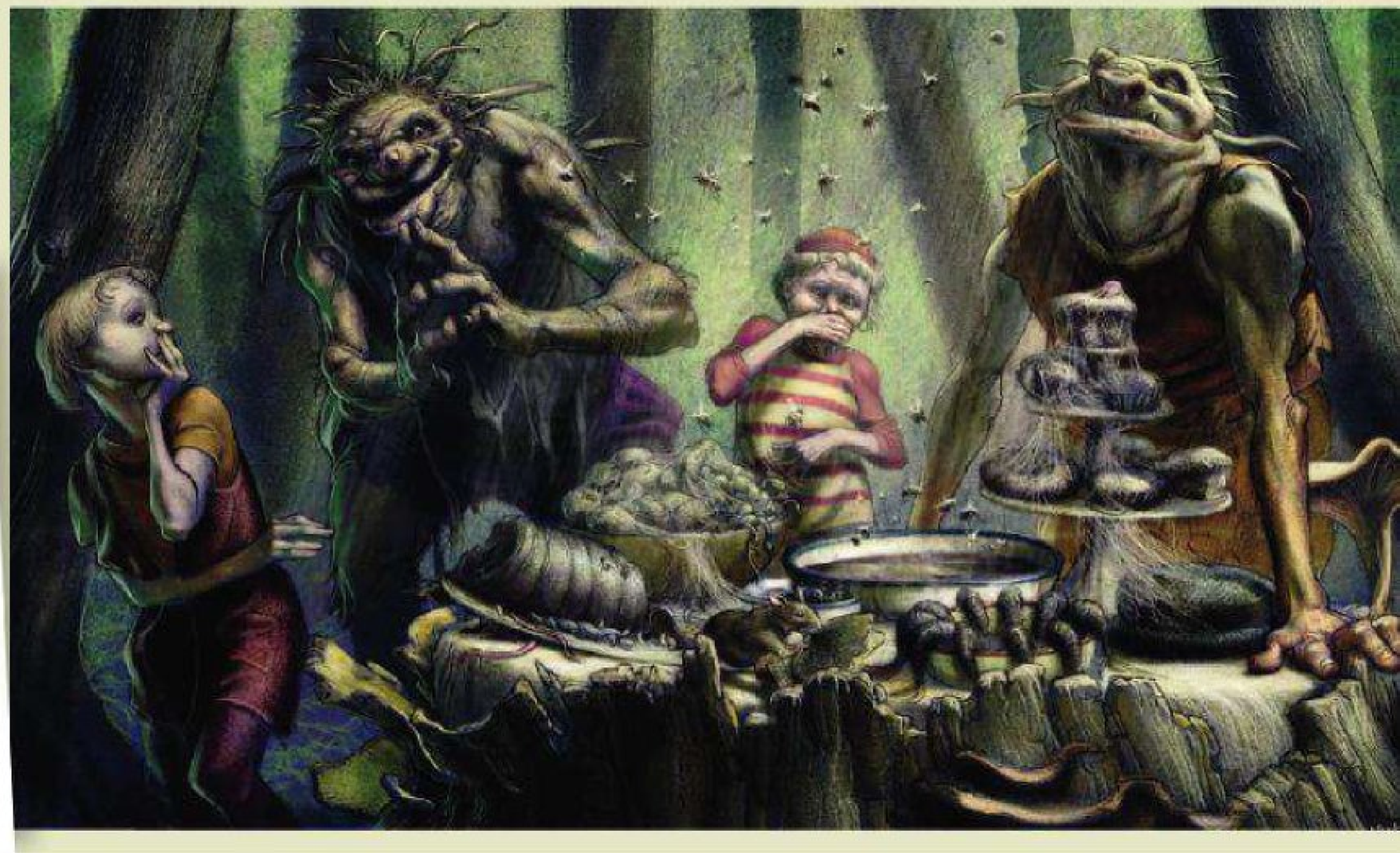


Different foodstuffs decay in multiple ways, attracting a variety of moulds and fungi. Often the food shrivels and discolours, with colour either fading and/or evolving into browns and blacks, turning into an unrecognisable state. The way it decays is dependent on its environment. Consider how the same food items may react to a hot desert compared to a damp cellar. Moisture is important. This sounds complicated, but like all subjects, use research and observation combined with the rules of lighting and colour to guide you.

I've picked a woodland setting, offering an element of insect and animal involvement if I choose to go down that route. In gloomy and low light, insects such as worms may provide necessary clues. In Charles Dickens's classic novel Great Expectations, Miss Havisham's abandoned wedding banquet is covered in cobwebs – and maggots.

My approach to the scene is to paint food that's recognisable as food, but revolting. I use exaggerated body language to show the children's repulsion and, perversely, the goblins' and trolls' appetite for the rotten food. I draw the food almost as normal, then replace the usual colours with purples, browns and greens, adding roughened textures to indicate mouldy areas. Break up some bits here and there, and add cobwebs, rats and insects to – ahem – taste.

As well as colouring and texture, the reaction of your characters can signal how the viewer should feel about your depiction of food.



Artist's secret

PAINTING DETAIL



I'm using SketchBook Pro 2011 for this one because it's easy to make custom brushes in, but exploit your chosen software's texture brushes for mouldy surfaces. Draw cobweb strands to both hide and describe form, and contrast unaffected colour areas against rotting food colour to emphasise its wrongness.

Step-by-step: Painting a starry sky



1 First I paint in my basic night sky, remembering to keep the stars on a new layer for editing ease later on. Using a small semi-soft Round brush I make gentle dots to form the key constellation patterns (search for star charts online). I then reduce the brush size and add in more, much smaller stars.



2 Once I'm happy with the overall placement of my distant stars, I go back and add a brighter white on top of some of them. I'm careful not to do too many or else the image will look overwrought. Now I take a Soft Edged brush to add subtle pastel colours around some of the stars.



3 I always need a clean-up stage for stars. I zoom out and take a critical eye to areas that are too cluttered, too uniform or too bright and fix the issues. An Eraser on low opacity enables me to push bright stars back, and the Lasso tool allows for easy rearrangement until the result look natural.

Question
How do I go about designing a mech with armour and weapons?
Sandra Weintraub, Germany



I paint my law-enforcement mech alongside a human policeman to show the scale of the vehicle. Criminals would have to think twice before taking it on!

Answer
Remko replies



Creating Mechs affords you a lot of freedom because they don't exist in real life. There are very few rules as such, and this gives you almost endless possibilities to explore during the design process.

I start by imagining what I'd do if I had to build such a huge fighting machine for a client. What's its purpose? Is it made to attack or defend? For example, if it goes on the offensive, what kind of enemies or structures does it go up against? What weapons are needed to achieve these goals? Would it need to fly or travel underwater?

Once I get an idea of the kind of mech I'm creating, I begin the drawing process. On a white background and with a hard-edged Round pencil – pen pressure turned off – I draw a few thumbnails to get an idea of where I'd like to go with my design.

I then choose the body shape that works best and begin to develop the forms, painting in some light using a soft Round brush and the Lasso tool to create masks. I then figure out where its weapons should best be located and start to paint in laser Gatling guns and rockets. I come up with the idea that the mech is fitted with several metal plates that it can move to create a huge shield in case of concentrated enemy fire. With these plates in motion it should give any game animators plenty of opportunities to be creative, although the mech needs to look solid, too – able to soak up punishment dished out by criminals.

Finally, on a new layer in Linear Dodge, Multiply or Overlay mode that's above my background layer, I use several grungy custom brushes to paint in scratches and patina. Now the mech feels more realistic, as if it's been through several battles.

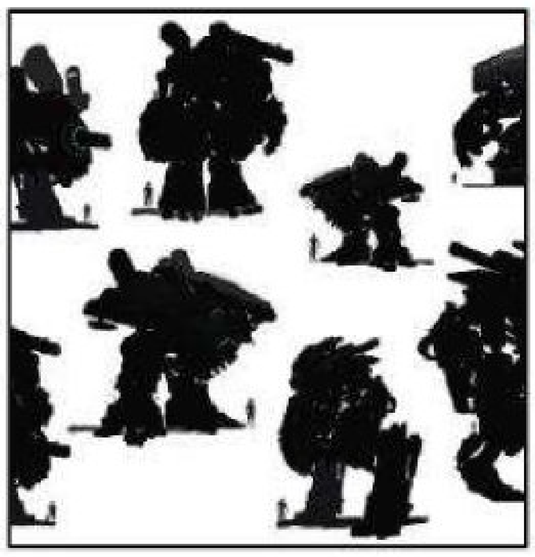
Of course this is just an example, but using this basic approach is an easy way to turn a blank page into a concept that looks authentic. Have fun with yours!

Artist's secret

SHARPEN YOUR IMAGE

A very effective way to sharpen your image is to use Photoshop's hard edges effect – you can find it in the Others category. Drop all your layers, double your background, apply this filter and then set your layer to Overlay mode. You can double your layer for even greater sharpness.

Step-by-step: Paint a law-enforcement mech



1 Once I've come up with the mech's function – in this case it's for police enforcement – I can begin creating the basic form of the machine. Using a hard-edged basic Round brush on a clean white background I quickly paint a number of thumbnail forms to generate ideas and see what interesting mechanical elements pop out from these initial sketches.



2 To speed the sketch process I use the Lasso tool to create masks and shapes within a chosen thumbnail. From here I can paint areas of light to make my forms pop off the canvas and soon the law-enforcement mech begins to take shape. These simple painting techniques help to turn arbitrary shapes into forms that please the eye.



3 With the basic form, structure and lighting of my mech taken care of I can begin adding in the details that'll give it personality and believability. On a separate layer, with some grungy custom brushes, I paint in scratches and embellish the mech's design, giving it credibility and a story, suggesting that it's come up against some hardened criminals.



4 I've imagined a Mech used by a futuristic police force, so even though it should be impressive enough to convince intergalactic criminals to back down, it shouldn't look too aggressive. It represents the law, not Darth Vadar. That's why I've painted most of its weapons pointing downwards – it's the closest this stomping lawmaker can get to keeping its pistol holstered.

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Question
What's the right way to depict dappled light on the forest floor?
Marisa Corrigan, US



This diagram shows how light passes through leaves and becomes diffused to create patches of light on the ground.

Answer
Cynthia replies



When sunlight passes through a tree canopy, it becomes diffused and ends up hitting the ground in patches. Without clouds and trees in the way, the sun would be free to cover the scene in a completely even light that would produce equal shadows throughout your picture. However, each leaf cluster now acts as a tiny shield against the light, and splits it into what can be thought of as a cone of shadow, becoming lighter toward the edges, away from the central umbra. As a general rule, the higher up the tree canopy is, the fuzzier the edges of the patches of light.

Once you estimate how intense and how fuzzy the light in your scene needs to be, the effect can be achieved several different ways. One way is to use a light yellowish colour with a soft brush on an Overlay layer to paint the dappled light. To give the warm sun spots the most impact, try cooling down the grass or ground cover around them by adding blue and purple hues around the light spots. Alternatively, if your ground cover isn't highly saturated, try using the Dodge tool on Highlights at a low-medium Exposure with a Soft brush to gently pull out bright spots. This method works best for comps and quick sketches because of its simplicity, or used to enhance hand-painted light dapples. A third way is to create a new layer with a Hard brush and use a solid light colour to create the general shape of your light patches. Then use the Blur tool or Gaussian Blur filter to create custom fuzziness to the edges.

A depiction of a woodland hut with patches of sun on the ground, filtered through nearby trees.

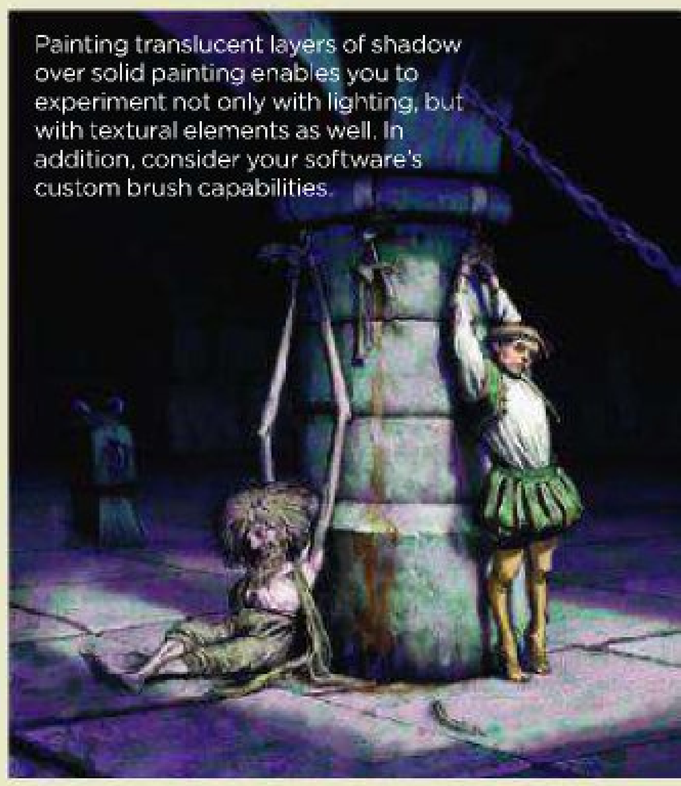
Question
How can I create rocky textures and original colours for a dungeon?
Gary Robson, Canada

Answer
Nick replies



Expanding on the question, we're talking about adding more visual interest. A dungeon setting also offers dramatic lighting, composition and added details such as chains and torches.

Working in ArtRage on a fairly plain scene, I first use the combination of chalk and paper textures on layers over the drawing (Painter is great for this type of thing). I make ArtRage stencils out of suitable texture images and paint through them, building up areas of interest like the at base of the column. You could also overlay texture photos using layer blending modes and erasing (or layer masking) where they're not wanted. I build colour using a combination of opaque and translucent layers (Multiply blend mode for shadow).



Painting translucent layers of shadow over solid painting enables you to experiment not only with lighting, but with textural elements as well. In addition, consider your software's custom brush capabilities.

As long as you get the tones right, you can use all sorts of colours, like the combination of pink, green and blue I've used in splotches for my stone colour.

Question
How do I make an indoor environment seem aged and dusty?
Fiona Collins, Scotland

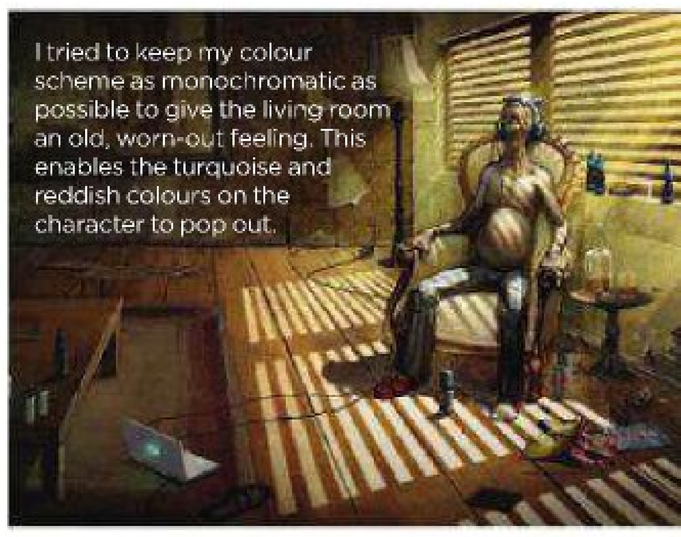
Answer
Remko replies



There are lots of ways to make things or environments look old and dusty. The best way to represent a feeling of decay in an object or room is through colour. Painting objects in desaturated colours works well: this implies that such objects are unable to reflect light because they're covered in dust. Now is not the time to apply highlights in your art!

For my room I use greyish, desaturated beige colours, which are commonly associated with dry, dusty places. Next I use an old wallpaper texture that's become scratched and torn over time, and draw some pieces that have peeled off onto the floor.

On the wall near the character I smash the surface so the wood and brick appears behind the plaster. I used the light coming through the windows to paint some floating dust particles. Then I take some photos of dirty walls and concrete and set them on a new layer in Overlay mode, set to about 40 per cent opacity. I drop my layers and with grungy custom brushes I paint in some more dirt and scratches. Finally I drop all my layers and on a new Color layer above my painting I use a soft Rounded basic brush to paint in desaturated greens and blues in the shadows.



I tried to keep my colour scheme as monochromatic as possible to give the living room an old, worn-out feeling. This enables the turquoise and reddish colours on the character to pop out.

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Question
Can you give me some advice on drawing veined, sinewy hands?
Max Hughes, US

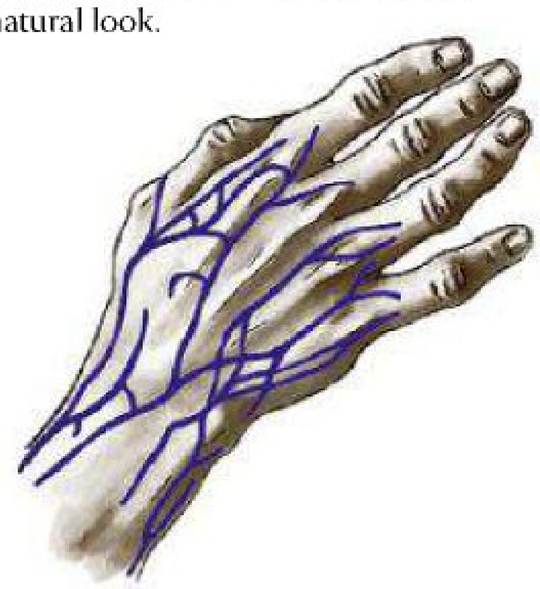
Answer
Lauren replies



Sinewy or veined hands are tricky because you're trying to portray so many layers of detail that are below the surface. But this is the key point: those layers are details that can be divorced from the structure of the hand itself. And it's important to get that basic structure right.

When I have to draw a strong or aged-looking hand, I always start with the basic structure before I dive into rendering the sinew and veins themselves. This ensures the hand works as a whole and I'll already have my colours and lighting figured out. Depicting sinew or muscle is easier than veins, because all you need to do is enhance the natural shapes of the hand. The key areas are those around the knuckles and the back of the hand where the ligaments can protrude. For veins, I find it easiest to look up medical anatomical drawings in addition to photos of old or strong hands; these drawings depict the muscles, bones, and veins in great detail and help me understand how the veins lay over the rest of the hand. They're an excellent resource.

The key thing in terms of rendering veins and sinew is to find a balance between soft and hard edges. You need enough sharpness to prevent the details from becoming a blobby mess, but you'll also want to gently roll the edges of your shading to keep things from being too harsh. Veins don't need to be rendered as tubes of skin. In other words, blend them into the surrounding skin for a more natural look.



Understanding how the veins lay across the bones and ligaments of the hand will help make drawing and painting them much easier.



Drawing veined, sinewy hands is a balancing act of depicting several layers of detail without losing sight of the overall structure of the hand.

Question
How do I paint water that's writhing with eels and fishes?
Mark Dawson, England



The fully painted image uses the shapes of the fish and eels to determine where ripples in the water occur.

Answer
Cynthia replies



To get a strong sense of action, I'd begin by sketching the curvy shapes of the fish using interlocking C- and S-shaped curves. S-curves in particular have historically been used to show twisting motion in bodies, but in this case the curves will create a busy mass of writhing movement on the surface of the water.

Once you have the bodies sketched out, add a layer with the colours you want reflecting in the surface of the water; here I choose blues and greens. Using a dark colour, loosely echo the contours of the fish (inset image) to create a basic outline of where ripples might go.

I start painting ripples around the fish by blending the water surface colour with the dark contours in long strokes, starting at the mouth of each fish. When painting the fish, I blend their hard edges into the water's surface colour and add some browns to give the appearance that their bodies are half-covered by slightly dirty water. Where the water meets the fish there'll be tiny bright highlights, but be careful not to overdo these.

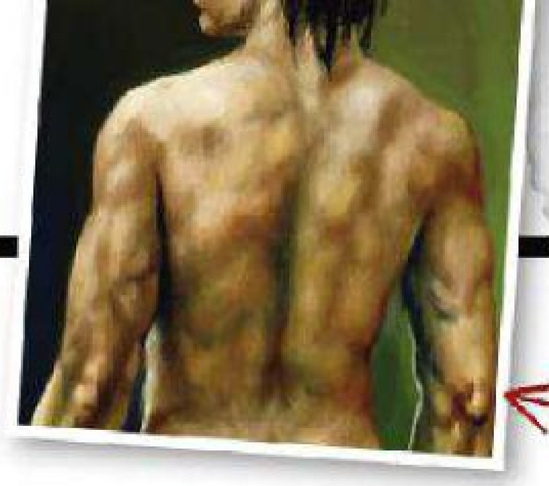
As a final tip, if at any point you feel like the composition isn't working, try smoothing out some of the ripples between the fish, but always follow the contours you created in your sketch.



Sketch out the bodies of fish and eels using interlocking curves.

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Next month
ON SALE: **4 May**
How to accurately paint back muscles

Question
How do I give a character a ghostly translucency?
Carl Gentry, UK

Answer
Tom replies



Creating ghostly shapes with a translucent effect can be a little daunting, but I use a simple technique that can be applied to a lot of things where you may need a translucent feel, such as ghosts, underwater creatures and plants, smoke, glass objects or even bubbles.

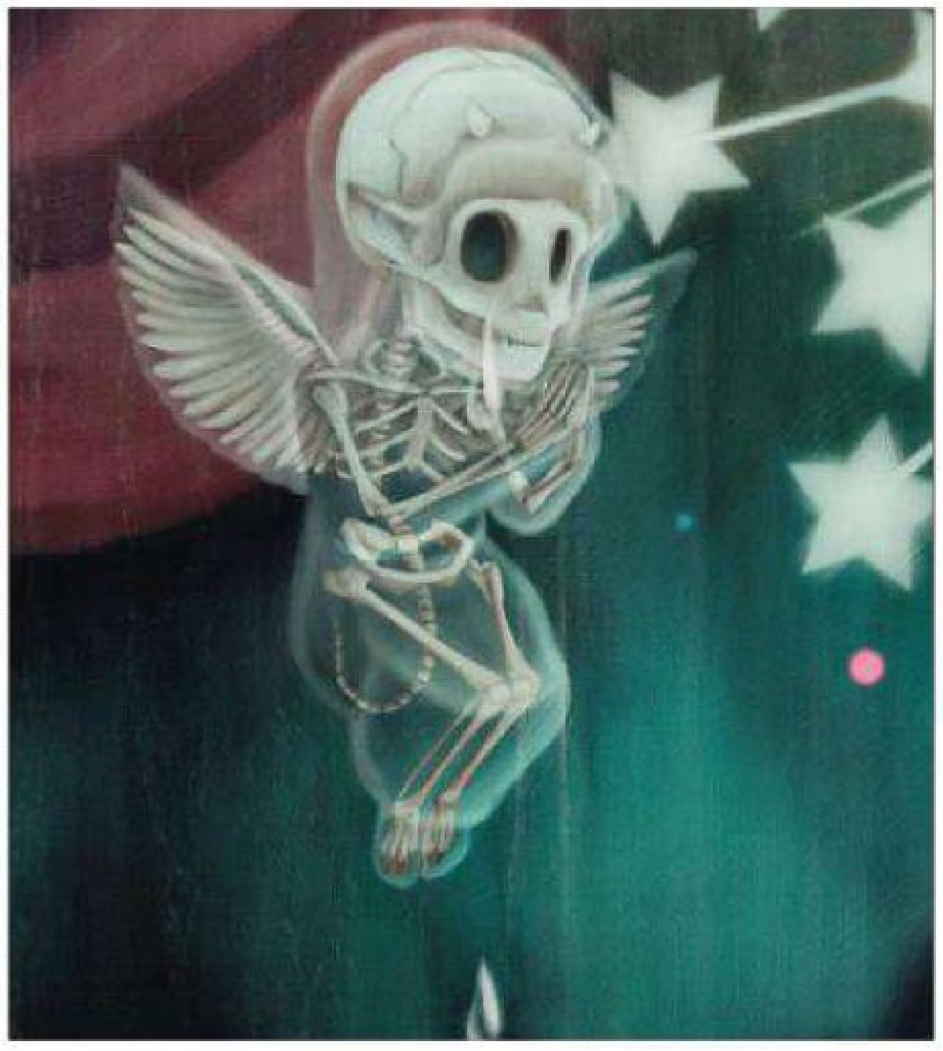
I use Photoshop CS2 but my method can be readily applied using later versions as well as Painter, because it makes use of vector shapes and simple layer masking. I think that as long as there's a light source and you can make a guess at where that light will affect a translucent object you're half-way there.

I start by sketching the shape I want to appear translucent on a new layer. At this stage don't worry about any details – just concentrate on the main shapes. On a layer above I use the Pen tool to create a vector shape. With the shape selected, I create a Solid Fill layer, drop its opacity down to 90 per cent and add a layer mask to it. Now it's a relatively simple case of using a Soft brush with a low opacity to gently paint onto the layer mask with solid black in order to make areas see-through.

Finally, to get the most from the effect I concentrate my efforts on the surface form or more solid areas where more light is bouncing back, if you want the texture to be slightly 'milky'.



The ghosts' bodies are created on separate layers allowing for some overlapping. The extra colour highlights are added as clipping layers to the painted vector shape/mask layer.



The praying skeleton is painted first and then a ghostly angel body is added on top. I use Photoshop's Blur tool to soften the edges of the layer mask.

Step-by-step: Painting a ghostly figure

1 To get things started the basic shape of the ghost is added in as a Vector Fill layer with a suitable off-white colour. If you need to see your underlying figure sketch then you can obviously reduce the opacity further, but generally I drop it to 90 per cent so that the fill isn't completely solid in any particular area.



2 After a layer mask has been added to the vector shape layer of my friendly looking ghost, I select a default Round Soft brush with the opacity pushed right down to 10 per cent. I then gently start painting black onto the off-white mask, effectively making the character more translucent.



3 I keep working up the form of my ethereal character by gently eroding the mask; the solid areas give the impression of reflected light. If you make a mistake then you can simply paint back over with white to repair the damage. Once you're done you can also use the Blur tool to soften your brush marks.



Got a digital art problem? Is an image giving you art-ache? Our panel can help. Email your question to our experts at **help@imaginefx.com** or write to **Artist Q&A, ImagineFX, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK.**

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THE ART OF DYLAN COLE

From Avatar to the Land of Oz, matte painter and concept artist **Dylan Cole** has lent his epic skills to some of Hollywood's biggest pictures...

Something strange happened when Avatar came out. Cinema staff noticed that the same people were coming to see it again and again. You could put that down to the film's use of 3D technology, but the main reason why people wanted to lose themselves on Pandora three, four or five times a week was the film's astounding visuals.

"It was incredibly vindicating because all of the reviews emphasised the amazing world and being transported to someplace new. It's that type of escapism and virtual exploring that prompted me to do this job in the first place," says Dylan Cole, who was concept art director on Avatar.

While much of Dylan's work for Avatar was on concepts, he's also a matte painter of great repute. The idea of creating worlds that people – including himself – can escape to is what excites him, and he's known for his epic backdrops. "I love

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environment creation. I love creating worlds. It's kind of an escapist thing for me. I like the non-action: just the long, lingering establishment shot and all of that stuff because it sets the scope of the world. I actually really enjoy that," he enthuses.

USING THE SAME MUSCLES

The film Dylan says kick-started his career in matte painting was 2003's Daredevil, based on the Marvel comic. He did a series of paintings for the movie, adding skyscrapers, moody skies and urban lighting to live action shots. However, before Daredevil had even come out there was something even more epic on the horizon. The images he conjured of a dingy metropolis weren't even in his portfolio when, at the age of 23, he found himself jetting out to New Zealand to work with Weta on The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King. The rugged outdoor vistas he painted for this film – mountains, forests and great citadels – couldn't have been more different to the cityscapes of Daredevil.

"Obviously it's different subject matter, but it all comes down to the same principles: composition and lighting and colour and all that stuff, so you're still using all the same muscles," he says. "I think landscapes are a bit easier because you don't have to deal with exact architecture, but at the same time those fantasy films can be more difficult in a different way because you're trying to fill something that obviously doesn't exist and the audience knows in their minds it doesn't exist."

Dylan feels he's learned a lot about the dichotomy between realism and fantasy thanks to the time spent with Robert Stromberg, the production designer he worked for on Avatar. While he admits

HELL'S GATE

Dylan's concept art of the Valkyrie shuttle landing at the human mining colony on Pandora was used as a guide by Avatar's visual effects wizards.

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to being a sci-fi geek at heart, he loves the challenges of making matte paintings that are invisible to the viewer. One of his favourite jobs was a small one: he painted up a scene of 1940s Beverley Hills for Martin Scorsese's The Aviator, used in a sequence where Howard Hughes crashes his plane in the suburb. He also created realistic settings for Memoirs of a Geisha and The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift.

"I did the opening shot of Eagle Eye where it reveals this Afghan village and that was a really classic matte painting," he continues. "I find it to be much harder than the fantasy stuff just because it's so unforgiving. It has to look absolutely real. The fantasy stuff does too, but it's something that doesn't exist to begin with whereas the invisible stuff has to look 100 per cent real. In my opinion the best artist at that is Robert Stromberg and I've learned a lot from him."

SURF FISHING AT SUNSET
"I think too often science fiction turns into something dystopian, so I wanted to create something idyllic and relatable," says Dylan.

LA HAZE
This personal image was inspired by a photo Dylan took flying into LAX airport on a hazy day.

ABSORBING THE KNOWLEDGE

When you ask him about influences, Dylan immediately harks back to his childhood and the hours he spent poring over The Art of Star Wars books, which included the work of Michael Pangrazio, Harrison Ellenshaw, Frank Ordaz and Christopher Evans. But the greatest matte painter of all time, he says, was Albert Whitlock. When Dylan worked briefly at Illusion Arts on The Time Machine, he had the opportunity to absorb the knowledge of Syd Dutton and Bill Taylor who were contemporaries of Whitlock. It's a matte painting tradition he's proud to carry on.

Of course, the media he has at his disposal are vastly different to the ones Whitlock used when he was winning Oscars in the 1970s. Even though Dylan learned to paint traditionally and studied fine art at UCLA, his application of choice is Photoshop, with a little Cinema 4D thrown in. He particularly likes its camera projection tools for matte painting.

He works organically, and doesn't sketch many design studies before he embarks on a picture. To establish the composition, he blocks out areas of the image and starts



DYLAN COLE

VITAL STATISTICS

"I am a child of the 80s"



Date of birth
23 August 1979.
Place of birth
Oceanside, California.
Current location
Los Angeles.
Favourite artists
Albert Whitlock, Federic Church, Albert Bierstadt, Frank Frazetta, John Berkey, Michael Pangrazio, Chris Evans, Syd Mead, Edwin Weeks, Jean Leon Gerome, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, JC Leyendecker.
Average time spent on a painting
One of my matte paintings will take me anywhere from two days to two weeks depending on detail and subject matter.
Favourite band
Killswitch Engage.
Last book you read
Boneshaker by Cherie Priest.
What's wrong with anime?
Those are the most messed up faces and voices I have ever seen or heard. Cool tech designs, but I just can't handle the look.
What interesting items would we find at your desk when you're painting?
A gigantic mess of everything that I haven't had time to put away. Nothing out of the ordinary, just a lot of it. Sometimes you can find my cat, Cringer. Yes, that is a He-Man reference!
Which story do you most want to paint?
My own! But until that happens I think it would be great to do Neal Stephenson's Diamond Age.
Web address
www.dylancolestudio.com

"I find Earth-bound environment work to be much harder than the fantasy stuff just because it's so unforgiving. It has to look absolutely real"

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ARTIST TIP

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MILEAGE

"Work as hard as you possibly can. It's very competitive, everybody wants it, so just keep working. You've got to get out the bad paintings before the good ones can come. It's just about a work ethic of insanity, basically."

AVATAR
BUILDING A WORLD

Dylan's artwork helped shape the look of the sci-fi blockbuster, both inside and outside cinemas...

At the 2010 Academy Awards, Avatar picked up the Oscar for Production Design. A great deal of how the film looked was down to Dylan's concept art skill. It's been the biggest project of his career so far.

"I was brought in by Robert Stromberg in July 2006, who eventually became one of the production designers and won an Academy Award," he says. "I mainly worked on landscapes, like the floating mountains and the arches. I also designed a lot of the bioluminescent plant life. I developed a lot of the Tree of Souls and did a fair amount of work on the Hometree."

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AVATAR POSTER
In addition to an array of concept art that set the look and feel of the film, Dylan created the poster artwork to advertise it.

A highlight of his time on Avatar was creating the film's poster. "James Cameron asked me to paint it when we were having lunch in his editing bay. I did about 20 different variations and the final is very close to my original. I was then asked to do a daytime version for the international poster. I did everything but the image of Jake. Fox put that on top of my artwork. I used a render of Neytiri and I created all of the landscapes and planet stuff myself. I used a screen grab of Jake on his banshee that I painted up to work in the poster."

The project was so large that by the end of it he had forgotten some of the early work he did, and was surprised to see it brought to life in the final film. "I worked on some early concept paintings of the final battle. So to see that battle and to see shots that were similar to my paintings but were way, way cooler and more finished and better was amazing. I was very impressed."

INTO BATTLE
The Na'vi at war and their mounts, previsualising one of the battle scenes that takes place on Pandora.

HOMETREE
The Na'vi lived in a home of living timber. In Dylan's concept artwork for the film he created epic views of their Hometree.

WEIRD GRAVITY
On Pandora mountain ranges could float in the air, creating new biosystems in the process.

GEOLOGY
Pandora's incredible landforms were dreamed up by Dylan in his concept artwork for Avatar.

ImagineFX MASTER ART

AFTER-HOURS
The importance of a matte painter in creating the mood of a shot – and an entire film – can't be underestimated, as Dylan proved with Daredevil.

DAREDEVIL EFFECTS

A crime-ridden city at the dead of night was a backdrop that Dylan expertly created for the 2003 film Daredevil

Back when Dylan was young, it was comic books that got him into art. So it's fitting that the film he feels broke him onto the scene was based on one. "My first feature film matte painting was on Daredevil," he says. "I did that just after a few smaller jobs. That was the first time I did some real matte painting. I think I did 23 matte paintings or something like that in 10 weeks. It was really, really fast. It was a fantastic experience for me and the first work that I was able to show and put out there, and that's where people first noticed my work."



BEFORE...
Plates from Daredevil came through with the foreground shot live action. The film-makers wanted a more dramatic skyline, though.



...AFTER
Dylan had to work fast as part of the post-production team to paint in the cityscape that Daredevil operates in.

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DYLAN COLE

ARTIST TIP

THE BIG POND

"If you're a student, don't compare your art with other students. Compare it to the professionals because that's who you're going to be competing against. It's not about a big fish in a small pond, it's about being in the big pond."



bringing them to life. "I'll always start with the sky, because the sky determines the colour, lighting and palette of the entire image, assuming it's exterior of course," he says. "I generally try and find a good photo or combine photos, or manipulate a photograph because the sky's something that's so specific. Often, when you're dealing with these fantasy environments, the sky is the one thing to keep you grounded in reality and so I'll always try and make the sky as realistic or as dramatic as possible, and really sell the mood."

Typically, a matte painter works from background to foreground, but Dylan likes to jump between the two. For instance, if a great castle is the focal point of an image, he might move to this after the sky, and then work the rest in around it. He uses photos as much as possible, which is a way of ensuring realism in a live action film, but as he points out he's no slave to them. Sometimes he improvises by painting things in, and other times he has to innovate using 3D, or build his own miniatures for the setting.

STRANDED

Originally this image was inspired by a Syd Mead painting depicting the colonisation of the Moon, but Dylan worked from the viewpoint of an alien planet looking up at its moons.

"I had a lot of fun on Superman Returns, making icescapes out of drywall compound powder," he says. "I was intending on mixing it up and trying to shape some ice formations, but I noticed the dry powder had some wonderful scale when it was compressed and then flaked off. It looked just like icebergs. So I messed around with a technique where I would flatten out a cake of it about one-to-two inches high and then shove it from one side so it would break up in all of these interesting, natural ways. I would then photograph it in daylight, or light it however I wanted it. You learn so much from those happy accidents of nature."

> **When you're dealing with these fantasy environments, the sky is the one thing to keep you grounded in reality**

Having seen his expertise spread from matte painting into concept art, Dylan's portfolio is getting stronger all the time. Disney's TRON: Legacy and Alice in Wonderland, and yet-to-be-released films like the live action version of Akira, Transformers: Dark of the Moon and Oz: The Great and the Powerful are all recent projects. And he's also virtual environment supervisor on the Conan remake that's in the works. He tips it as one to watch out for: "That's been a lot of fun, with the best of the other artists that have gone before and what I like from the old Frazetta paintings and comic books and stuff like that!"

HUDSON CITY

The Hudson River School of Art is a personal favourite of Dylan Cole, so he painted this ode to it with a sci-fi twist, and put his wife in the foreground.



Development sheet

PROJECT TITLE: MASCOT

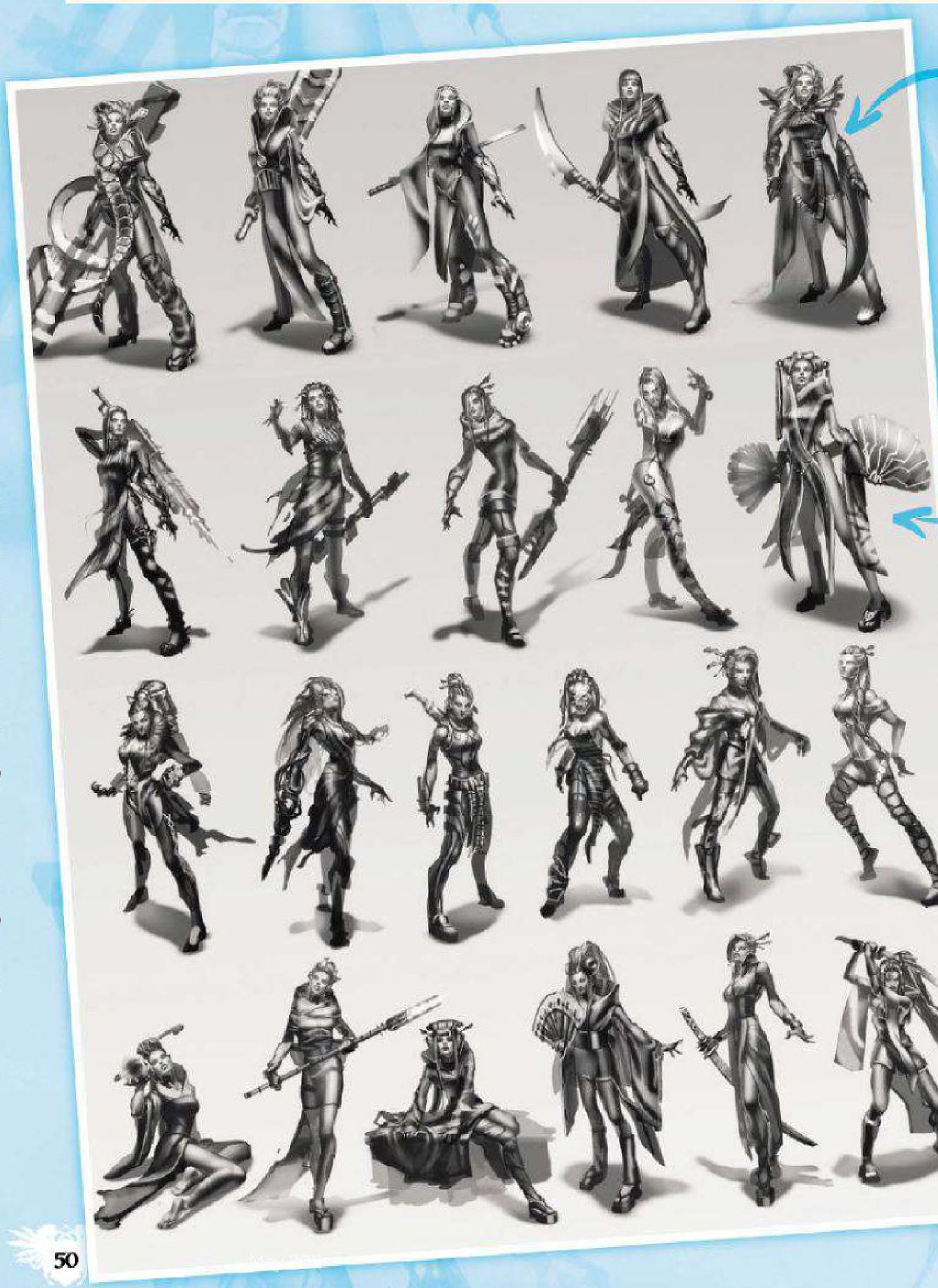
Asked to design a new female character, concept artist **Camille Kuo** set about creating Mascot, a fantasy-Asian heroine fit for all occasions. From 20 initial concepts, here's how she narrowed it down and brought Mascot to life...

Artist PROFILE

Camille Kuo

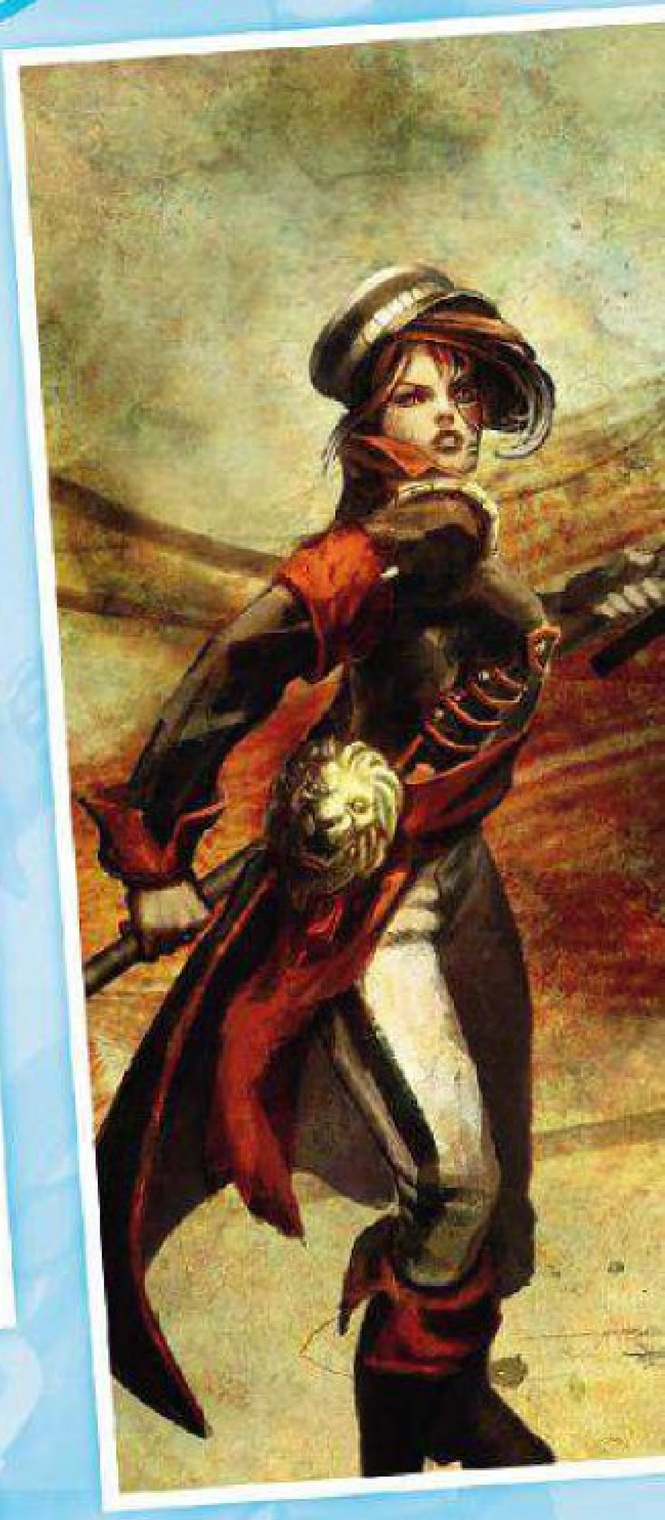


Taiwan-based artist Camille has worked in the video game industry for four years. She hopes to use her background as an illustrator to explore different art styles and some day make a living as a character illustrator. You can see some of Camille's designs at **camilkuo.cghub.com**.



Rough concepts These aren't really thumbnails, because simple silhouettes don't satisfy my needs in this case – I'm not looking for different body shapes. Lighting and shading provide more information for ease of design, and the clients always like to see several different styles of outlooks and poses.

Develop the look From these figures the client will only know that Mascot is a female in the fantasy-Asian style, so my job now is to add more detail to the character and costumes. I don't search for references, because this often takes up too much of my time. What I usually do is just brainstorm for any design or look that I've seen before as the reference, using my personal experiences to fashion the character's look.

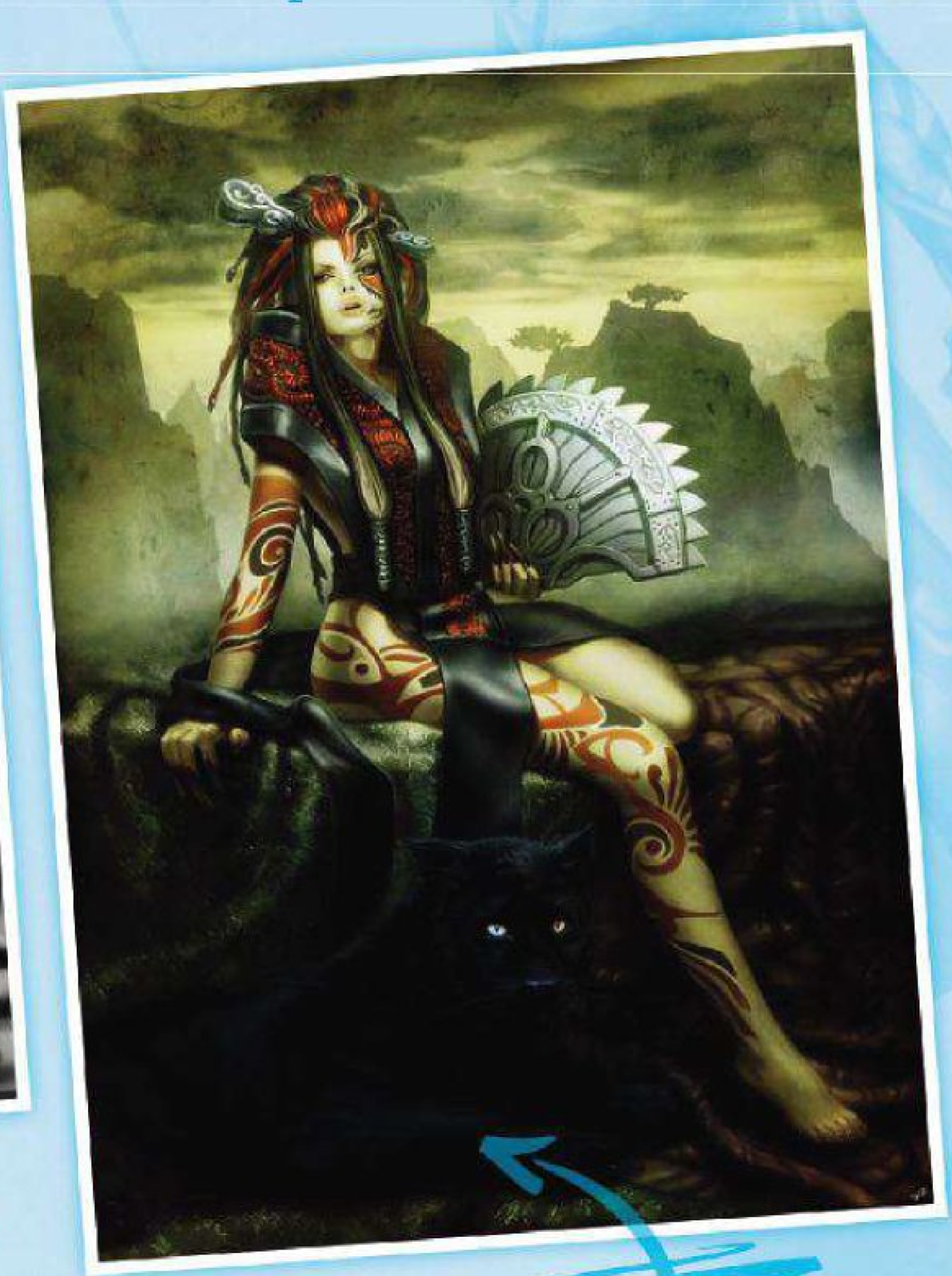


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Development sheet **Camille Kuo**





Final concept As you can see in this black and white work, the outfit (first from right in second row of my rough concepts) and the pose (third from left in bottom row) have been chosen for the final concept. So I put them together and detail it out in black and white first, and colour later, also adding the background.

Final illustration At the client's request, I refer Angelina Jolie's look for Mascot's face. I also feel it's empty on the bottom left, so I add a panther in a simple inconspicuous colour so it doesn't take the gaze away from the main subject.

Revolution Now that my character is designed in detail, I can experiment with her look. I choose to create another set of concepts for the revolution version of Mascot. As you can see, I've designed five different costumes and poses.



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Sketchbook

Artist PROFILE

Bayard Baudoin



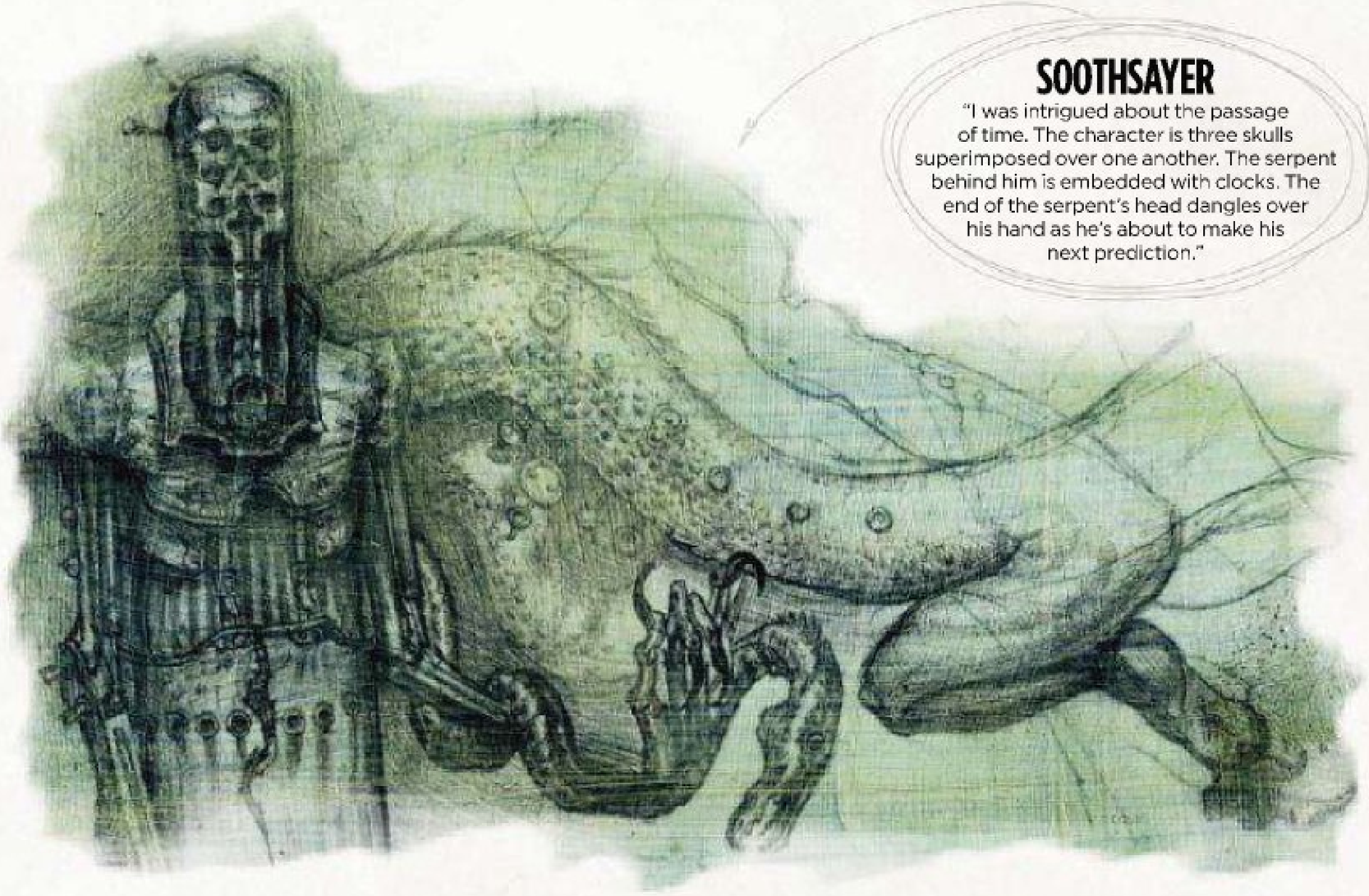
Bayard has a degree in illustration from the School of Visual Arts in New York and is employed as a visual effects artist in Los Angeles. So far he's worked in stop motion, makeup FX, music videos, video games and film. He also loves baroque ornaments, 17th century hyper-realistic woodcarving, automata, anatomy, robotics and everything surreal. Recently, he's been researching and exploring parks, abandoned structures and architectural relics throughout Los Angeles.
www.bayardbaudoin.com

Bayard Baudoin

When he's not experimenting with 3D modelling, Bayard takes his sketchbook out on surreal journeys into the dark heart of Los Angeles

FISHMAN
"A concept for a sculpture based on an old Inuit folktale of a fisherman that woke up half-fish."

sketchbook Bayard Baudoin



SOOTHSAYER

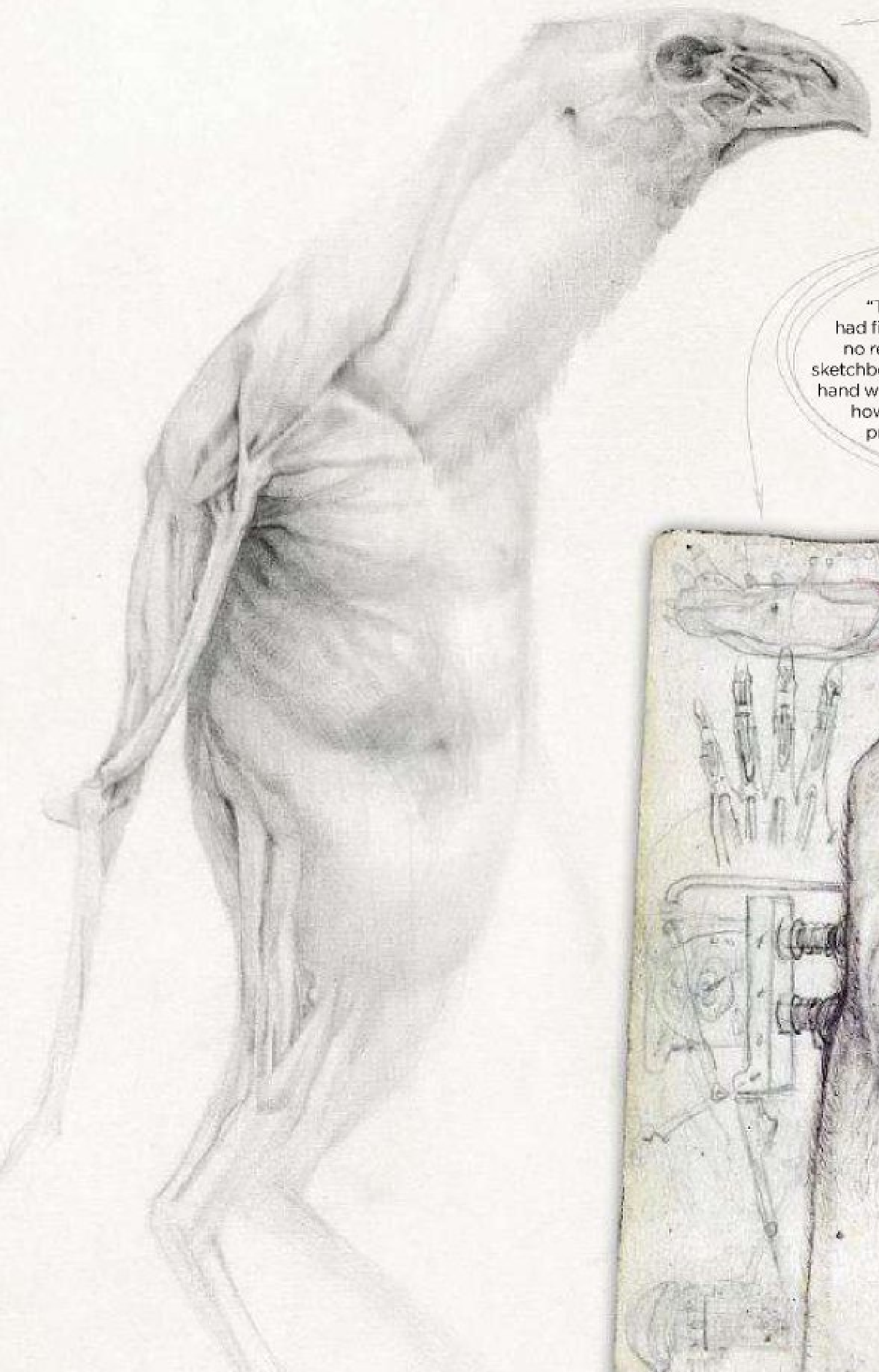
"I was intrigued about the passage of time. The character is three skulls superimposed over one another. The serpent behind him is embedded with clocks. The end of the serpent's head dangles over his hand as he's about to make his next prediction."



BIRDFLOWER

"I took the idea of a flower and related it to a car accident. I thought about a creature being shredded, its organs spilling out into space. I thought about a bird becoming that flower, its organs giving bloom to other entities."

"I thought about a creature being shredded, its organs spilling out into space..."



BIRDMAN

"With this sketch I was thinking about the relationship between the sinew of birds and tree branches."

HAND

"This was an homage to a sketchbook I had filled for a year, then lost on a subway with no record. The fish was representative of the sketchbook falling away. The mechanism behind my hand was representative of the fact that no matter how hard I had worked and no matter how precise I might have been, I was unable to save it from its fate."



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Sketchbook





MOUNTAINS

"A fantasy about wanderers who discover a giant woman stranded within a rocky crevasse."

DENIZEN

"An idea for a creature lurking in an alley, and a variant of the goddess Hel."



SKETCHBOOK

"I was particularly interested in Coco de Mer nuts for the bizarre likeness to human genitalia (upper right-hand corner). This led into stream of consciousness sketching about scissor mechanisms, masks, lions and whatever I happened to see."





FLEA

"This sketchbook page is quite old. It came about while sitting in Union Square in New York and observing my surroundings. There were bicyclists about, and insects swarming about in the grass. I imagined riding them about in some Western rodeo. As the bicyclists did tricks over the steps, I envisioned some ethereal creature in control of their wheels, with the serpent between its legs being the passage of time."

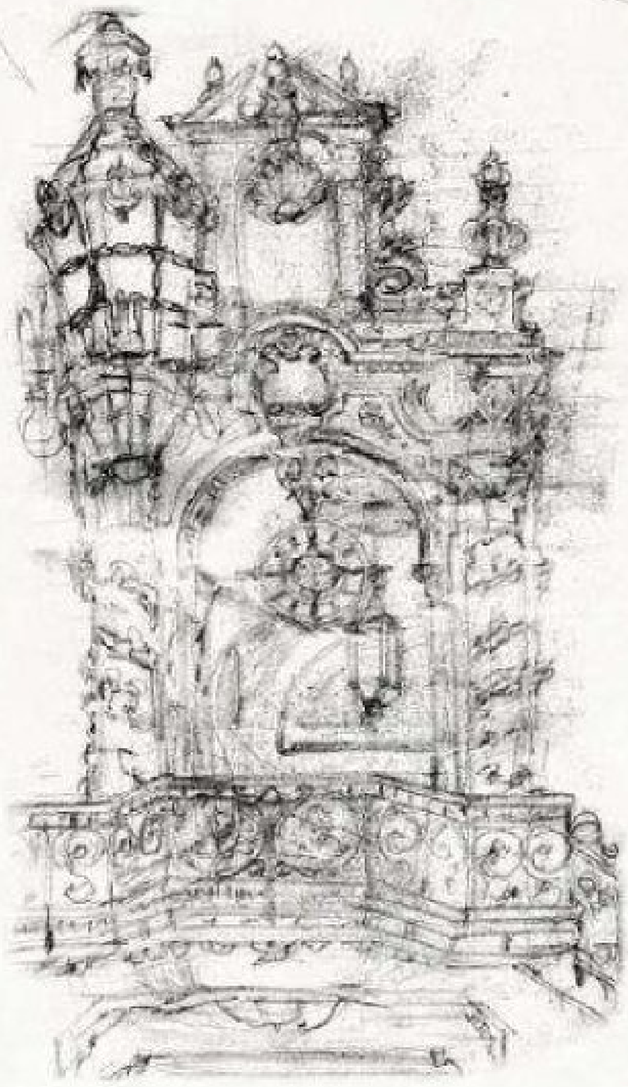
HOTEL

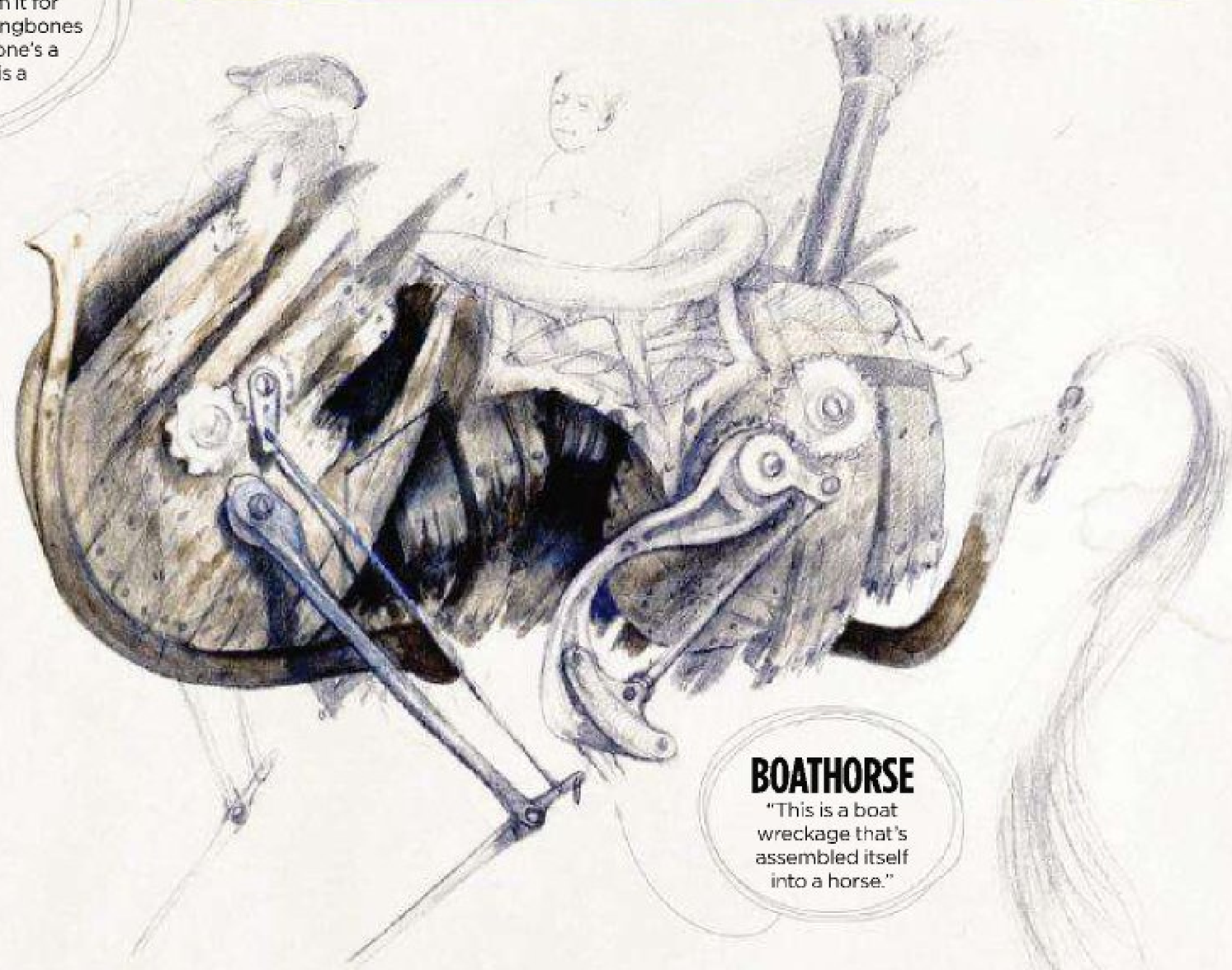
"This is a study of the Biltmore ballroom of Los Angeles, a fantastic building to try and capture on paper. I hope I've done it justice here."

BIRD

"This page was a surgery. During a painful and drawn-out relationship, I imagined myself in a sarcophagus of a wingless bird. Its arms have been cut from it for utensils for its mate. It's wingbones are now forks, the jawbone's a knife and its tongue is a serving spoon."

"During a painful relationship I imagined myself in a sarcophagus of a wingless bird"





BOATHORSE

"This is a boat wreckage that's assembled itself into a horse."

Want to share your sketches? Or know an artist you'd like to see featured in Sketchbook? Then drop us an email at **sketchbook@imaginefx.com**, or upload your sketches at **www.imaginefx.com/sketchbook**.

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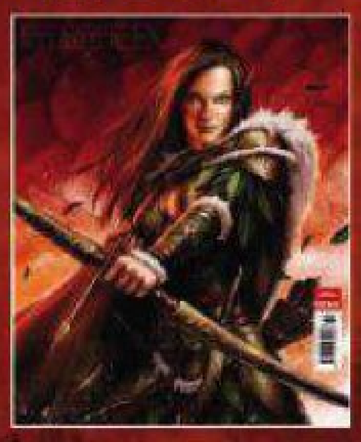
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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

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Issue 64 Christmas 2010



We celebrate the art of Dungeons & Dragons, and talk to the artists who launched the iconic game. Brush up your storyboarding skills, and follow our Poser and SketchBook Pro workshops. Plus, use your free, full-sized calendar to stay organised during 2011.

Issue 65 January 2011



Blast off into outer space with our A-Z of sci-fi art, from aliens to zero-gravity girls, and read about the techniques used to create art that's out of this world. We also talk to comic legend Moebius about his career and show how to design a TRON-inspired light cycle.

Issue 66 February 2011



Learn how to incorporate GIMP and SketchUp – both free art programs – into your workflow, be inspired by the techniques used by Ashley Wood and follow Justin Gerard's guide to drawing. And master fantasy artist Charles Vess explains his enchanting style!

Issue 67 March 2011



Adam Hughes's glorious Catwoman cover heralds a comic book special this month, as we look at Bill Sienkiewicz's groundbreaking art, DC's iconic covers and Jim Lee's sketchbook. And if you've ever wanted to give photo-collage a try, now's your chance.



Issue 68 April 2011

Discover how to use perspective in your art, create traditional-looking images and inject action into battle scenes. We also chat to Joel Chang, whose work appears in Sucker Punch.

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The New Legends of Epic Landscapes

Hand-picked from the commercial art and entertainment industries, these artists all share a flair for epic scenes and evocative environments that are sure to inspire

“A scene is like a character. It has its own personality and makes us feel emotions. A setting is as important as the people and figures who are in it”

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Raphael Lacoste



I really like to paint landscapes and environments, because it's an open invitation to go on a journey that's created by the artist's imagination. A scene is like a character. It has its own personality and makes us feel emotions. I think that a setting is as important as the people and figures who are acting in it. Depending on the image's composition, palette and mood, the tension and story will be interpreted differently.

www.raphael-lacoste.com

RAPHAEL'S TIP

BE INSPIRED

Don't just sit at your desk collecting references from the internet – visit museums and take photographs, too. Travelling is also a great source of inspiration. Sometimes it's better to spend money on a flight rather than on a brand new computer.

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Daniel Dociu



I'm particularly interested in imagining and developing environments for online games, because I see them as the most defining aspects for the worlds we're proposing. Landscapes are powerful storytelling tools, impacting the player with more immediacy than narration or lore, yet their potential is often overlooked or underrated. Character design is too crowded a space, because most young artists seem to gravitate towards it.

www.tinfoilgames.com

DANIEL'S TIP

LEARN TO LOOK

Understand the distinction between a landscape painting and an environment concept piece. The first is the result of looking at a space through the eyes of the fine artist. The latter entails proposing a space. The emphasis is on the idea.

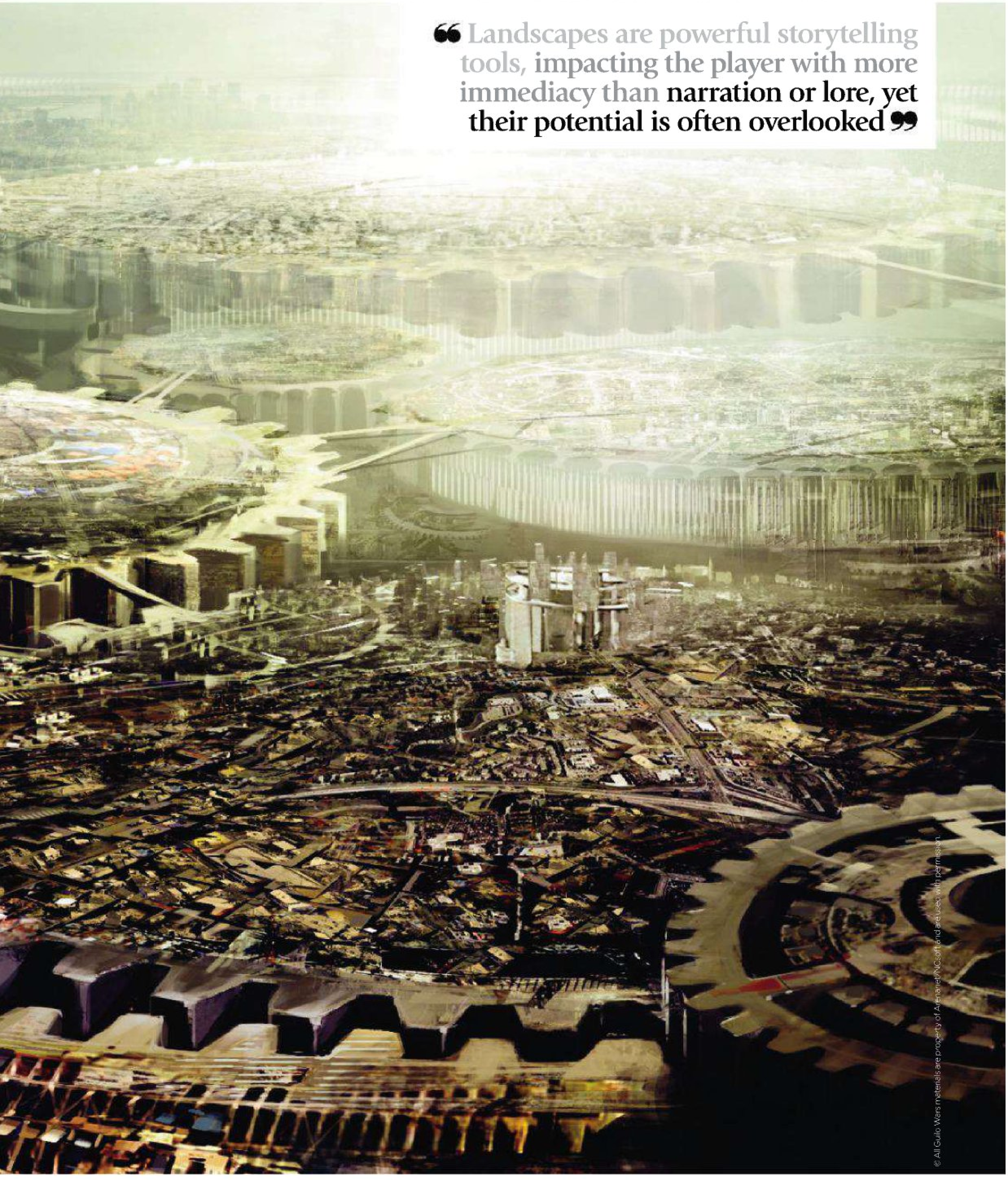


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Landscapes

> Landscapes are powerful storytelling tools, impacting the player with more immediacy than narration or lore, yet their potential is often overlooked





Gary Tonge



For me this image takes the best of Earth and space, and amalgamates them. There's the beauty of a jewel-like planet, immense technology and engineering, which represent humanity's future and the majestic enormity of what's out there in the infinity of the universe beyond.

www.visionafar.com

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❝ Painting vistas is about letting the viewer take in the awesome view. You want the picture to wash over them like a wave of expansiveness ❞

GARY'S TIP

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Painting vistas is about letting the viewer take in the awesome view. The key to this is to not overcomplicate or clutter any part of the image – you want the picture to wash over the viewer like a wave of expansiveness.

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Stephan Martiniere



The Dervish House is an elaborate and vivid story that mixes nanotechnology, religion and politics and many other interesting topics. It felt like a complex mosaic or a colourful tapestry, and approaching the painting in a graphic way seemed the best way to convey that feeling. I wanted the viewer to appreciate and understand the image as a whole, but also to explore every detail of that image and read each element as a separate story. The challenge for me was to carefully compose all these elements and create a well-balanced image, without cluttering it.

www.martiniere.com

> “I wanted the viewer to appreciate the image as a whole, but also to explore every detail of that image and read each element as a separate story”

STEPHAN'S TIP

GET THE BALANCE RIGHT

Balancing noise and details with a quiet and simple area helps the flow and composition of an image. It allows an image to feel complex yet easy to read at the same time.

Jesse van Dijk



This image was done as a commission for four book covers at once. The image was split up in four segments to cover the books in Markus Heitz's The Dwarves series. It was a challenging, but very rewarding project.

www.jessevandijk.net



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> When working on landscape concept art, always consider its purpose and/or the back story. Never lose track of what your work will be used for

JESSE'S TIP

CONSIDER THE STORY

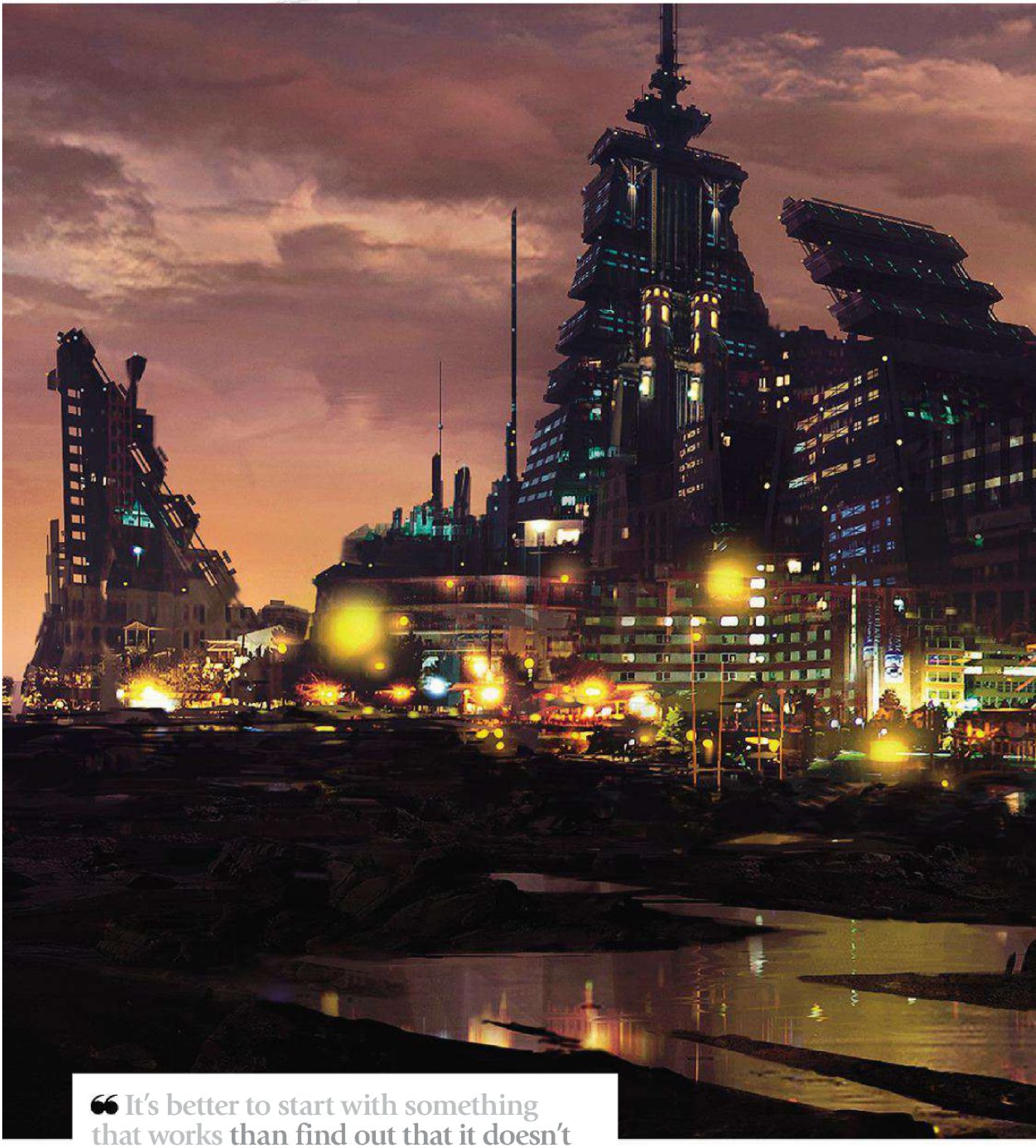
When working on landscape concept art, always consider the purpose of the landscape and/or the back story. Environments should always support a narrative or a game mechanic. Painting landscapes by themselves can be very rewarding, but when working for production, never lose track of what your work will be used for.



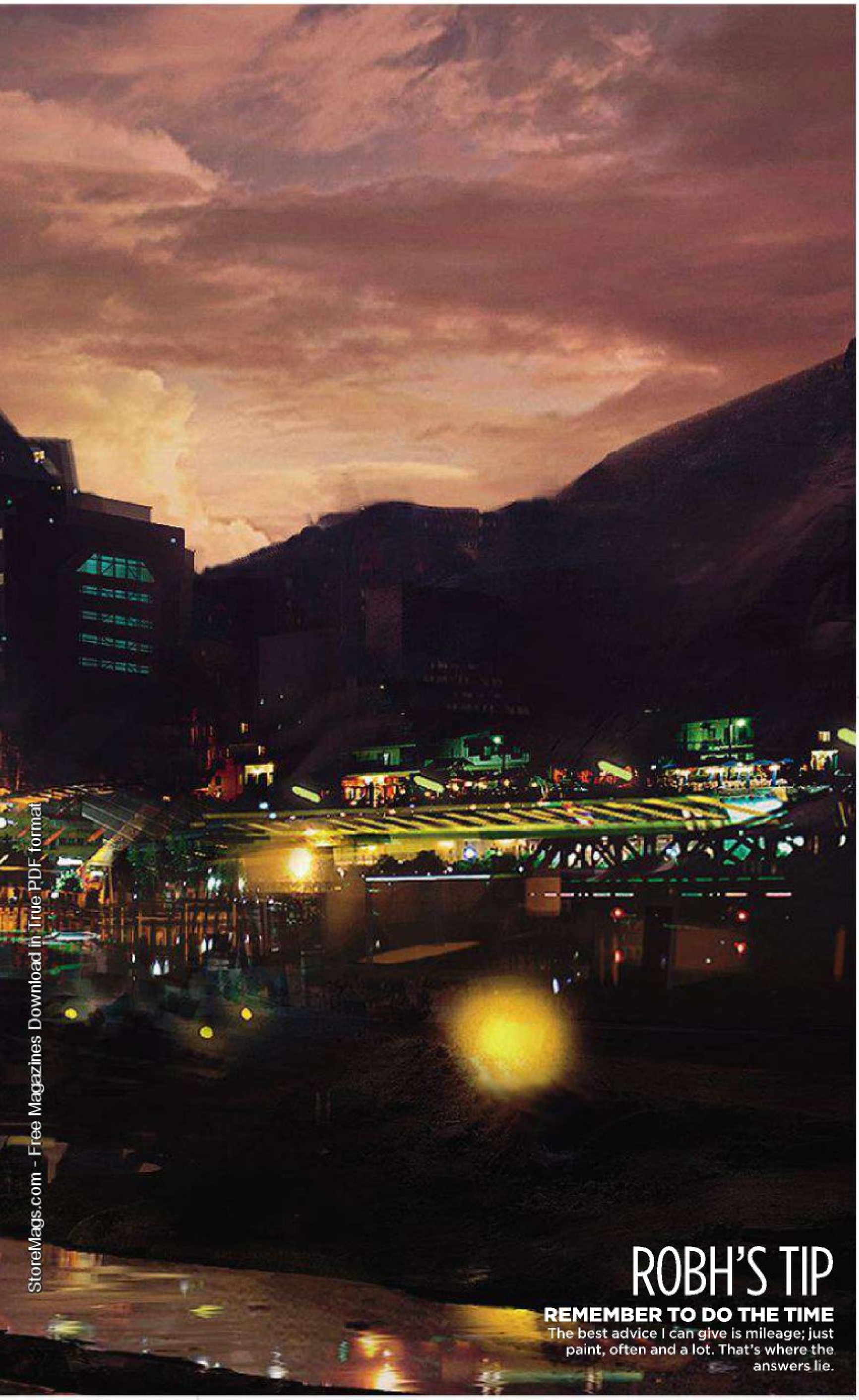
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> “It’s better to start with something that works **than find out that it doesn’t half-way through painting. This way you don’t have as much to tear down**”



ROBH'S TIP

REMEMBER TO DO THE TIME

The best advice I can give is mileage; just paint, often and a lot. That's where the answers lie.

Robh Ruppel



This painting was done for myself. My process starts with simple shapes to set the composition. It's better to start with something that works than find out that it doesn't half-way through painting. This way you don't have as much to tear down. Once the basic shapes are in place I work out the colours, then details follow. If you can get the right colours and values to start with, the details fall into place much easier. The 'effect' or look of an image is all about the simple read you get when values are in their proper place.

www.robhruppel.com

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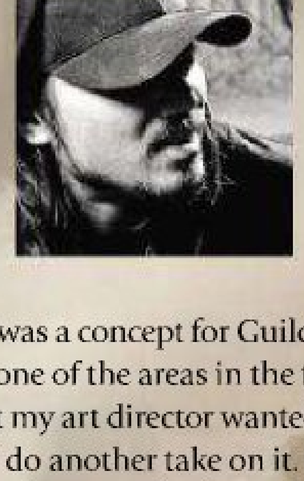
KEKAI'S TIP

ESTABLISH YOUR ELEMENTS

When doing a landscape I like to use atmospheric perspective. One thing to keep in mind for depth is to establish foreground, mid-ground and background elements.

> ❝ I've always liked painting trees. I spent some time figuring out which angle I wanted to go for ❞

Kekai Kotaki

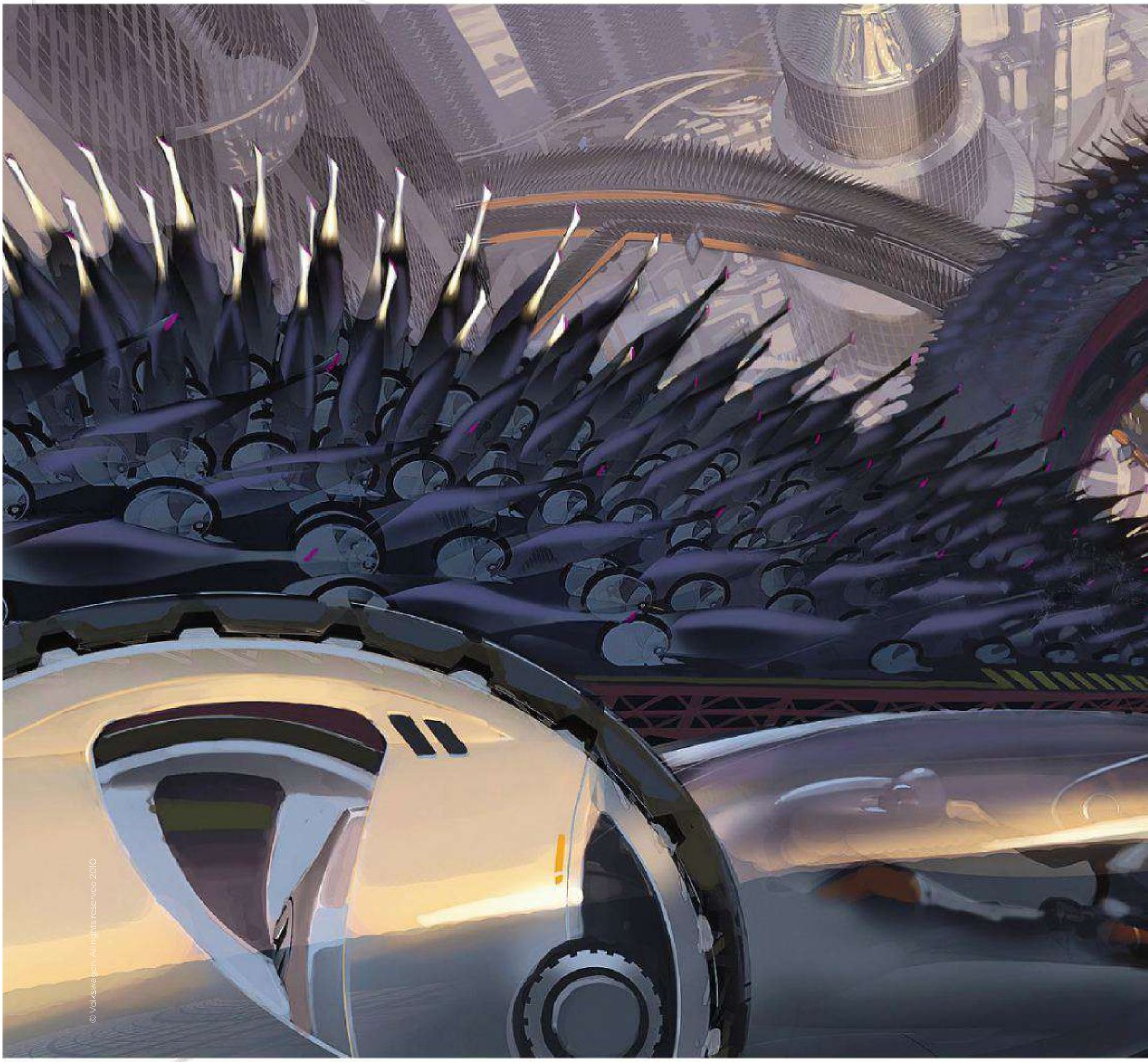


This was a concept for Guild Wars 2. It's one of the areas in the first game that my art director wanted me to revisit and do another take on it. I had fun on this one, because I've always liked painting trees and such. I did have to spend some time figuring out which angle I wanted to go for.

www.kekaiart.com

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fileplanet.com



Patrick Faulwetter



This image is of a futuristic traffic system that choreographs the actions of its users simultaneously. When travelling in the city the teardrop-shaped vehicles remain upright. But when the pods enter the special 'slipstream' lane high above the city they hit speeds of 250mph and move in unison. As a result the traffic, which consists of thousands of vehicles, flows with the elegance of one enormous organism. It's this 'living body' aesthetic that I wanted to communicate and focus on in my composition.

sketchpat.blogspot.com

PATRICK'S TIP

PLAY WITH PERSPECTIVE

I like to paint interesting ways that connect the foreground, middle-ground and background. Here I've used the streets to achieve this, creating a dynamic pathway that leads the viewer into the image.

"The traffic flows with the elegance of one enormous organism. It's this 'living body' aesthetic that I wanted to communicate in my image"

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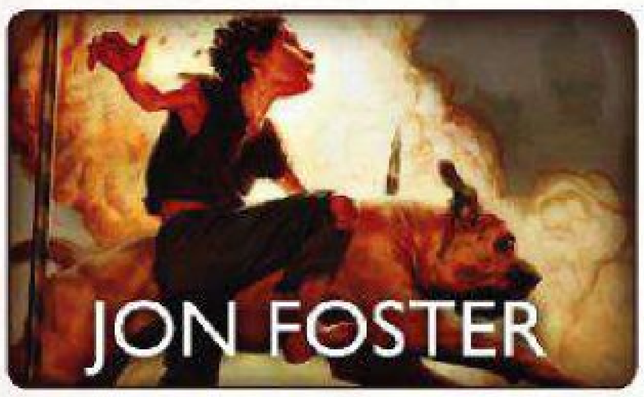
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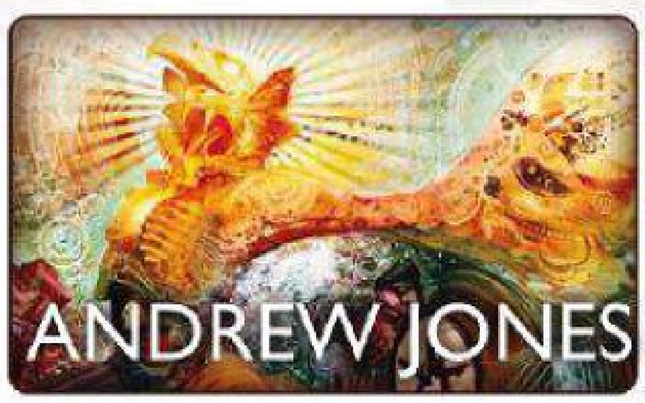
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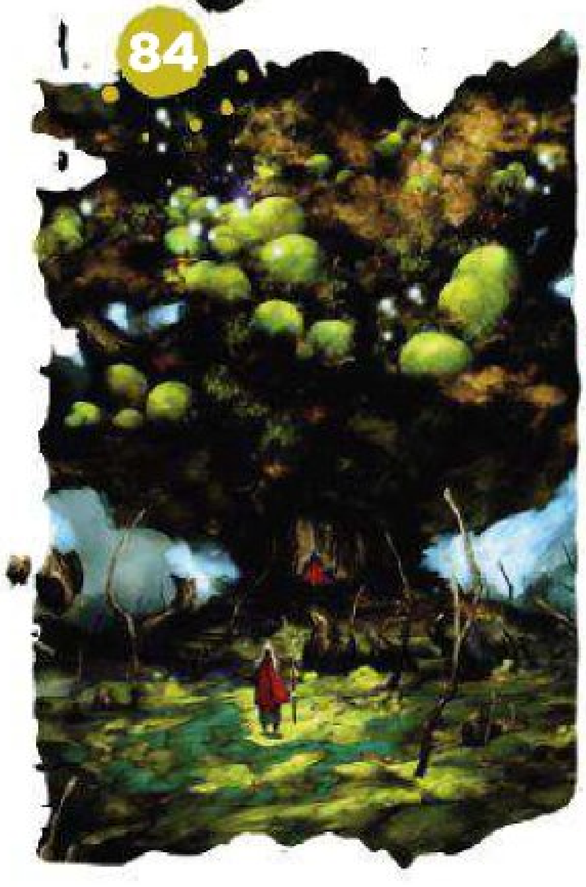
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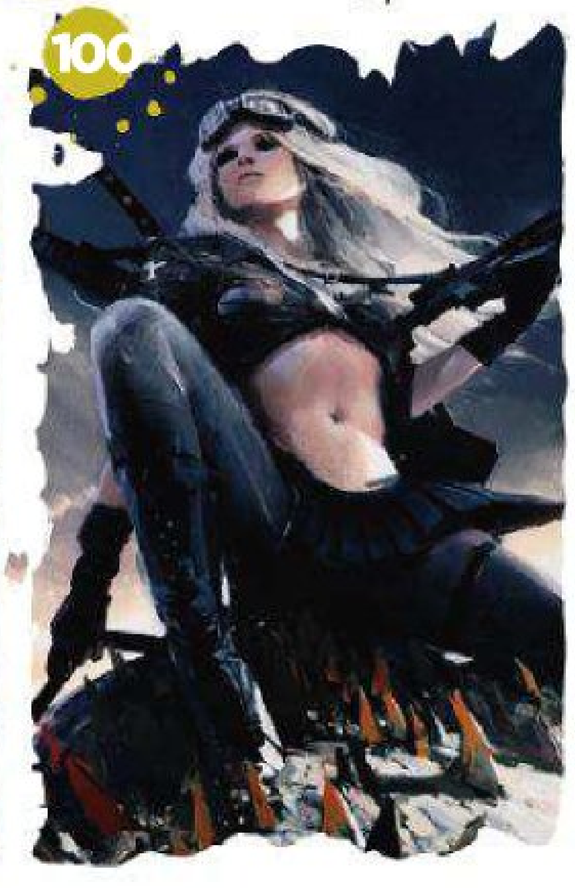


Advice from the world's best artists









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Sam Burley uses waves as a compositional element, adding a sense of energy and realism to a sci-fi landscape.

82 Show a futuristic battlefield vista
Adam Kuczek applies his concept art skills to depict a threatening situation in a post-apocalyptic war zone.

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Emmanuel Malin mixes textures with a balance of organic and graphic shapes.

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EPIC ART

Photoshop

PAINT A DRAMATIC WATERSCAPE

Sam Burley uses waves as a compositional element, adding a sense of energy and realism to a sci-fi landscape

VIDEO WORKSHOP ON THE DVD

Whether it's sci-fi, fantasy or from real-life scenes, water is a common element to many landscape scenes. With this workshop I hope to show how to take advantage of the energetic quality of waves to liven up what might otherwise be a boring illustration. Additionally, I'll focus on composition, colour and atmosphere to make a complete, coherent and effective environment. My process tends to vary by image, so how I start, the number of layers used, how long it takes, and when I add colour will always be different.

What does stay the same, however, is a constant analysis of how the image might be improved. With Photoshop, every whim is at your fingertips so there's no excuse not to fix something if it looks out of place. Take the time to experiment and see what works best.

During this workshop you'll see me backtrack a bit, but the image always becomes more effective because of it. Every error is a chance to do something again and better, so try to embrace those mistakes when they happen.

Artist **PROFILE**

Sam Burley

COUNTRY: US

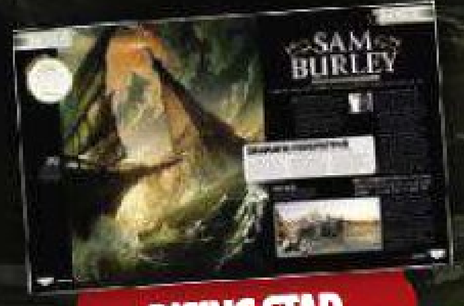


At a young age Sam was captivated by anything on a grand scale, and The Lord of the Rings and a love for artists of Hudson River School formed the desire to create deep space and immersive environments.

samburleystudio.com

DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD in the Sam Burley folder in the Workshops section.



RISING STAR

Remember Sam? He was one of ImagineFX's Rising Stars of 2010 (issue 61). Psst! Our search for 2011's Rising Stars launches next issue...

In depth Paint a dra tic waterscape

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1 The concept

I have a clear idea of what I'd like the scene to be: the light of a setting sun cutting through choppy waves, crashing into the rocky coast of a distant, futuristic city. I start by doing tiny thumbnails on paper, focusing on silhouette and trying to come up with an interesting structure to suit my needs. The spiked dome feels like a sea creature – some kind of horseshoe crab or strange urchin. The curves suggest a wave-like form, while the straight, sharp edges feel mechanical and industrial. This is a good toolbox of shapes to work with and complements the original idea.

Shortcuts

Layer via Copy

Ctrl+J (PC)

Cmd+J (Mac)

Creates copies of a layer, so you can make changes without harming the original.



2 The composition

With the building as a starting point, I can begin to define foreground, middle-ground and background layers that are essential to establishing depth in any landscape. It's vital that my values are laid out using hard, opaque brushes to avoid semi-transparent layers for when colour is added later. Duplicating the main structure and making it lighter and smaller helps sell the perspective and convey distance, and because there are lots of strong horizontals here, I balance them out with diagonals in the clouds and verticals in the towers. I'm also focusing on how shapes lead the eye. The large rock at the bottom-left is important because it keeps the viewer within the picture frame as the two dome shapes fire one's eye off to the left.

PRO SECRETS

Create an Overlay layer

Under Tablet Preferences, set the first Express Key as keystroke Cmd+F1. In Photoshop's Action Window, start a new Action, create a new layer and set the mode to Overlay. In the Action window, stop recording, double-click the new action (away from the text) and set the function key to Apple+F1. The corresponding tablet button will now create a new Overlay layer.



3 Refining the composition

The structure needs to look big so I've lowered the point of view, raised the building up, eliminated the coast and made a foreground out of the waves. Large city towers in the distance were competing with the scale of my dome, so I've decided to get rid of them, too. Additionally, the crossing verticals and horizontals between those two layers made an awkward, grid-like intersection that destroyed any natural feel to the composition. Angled rocks and crossing waves now provide opportunities to integrate diagonal lines and break up the rigidity of the remaining structures.

4 Make use of the waves

Because the waves are so close they become a strong compositional tool, pointing upward and forcing the eye back into the rest of the composition, away from the dark edge along the bottom. A translucent wave illuminated by the setting sun makes for tasty eye-candy attracting the viewer's attention to the lower portion of the image, but also helps break up the repetitiveness of the large mass of water.



5 Tweaking the sketch

I add definition to the shapes and make sure my value hierarchy is reading properly. If the structure becomes too dark it could feel too close and the effect of scale would be lost. Alternatively, if the foreground area becomes too light it won't have enough presence and the image won't have the punch it needs.

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6 Layer strategy

I'm now working on four layers: the large rock, the structure (and its rocks), and the city all separately, with the water and sky on the fourth. Having the foreground element on the lowest layer might seem counter-productive, but by the nature of painting a body of water, it makes sense. It travels backward under all the other objects and there's no clean breaks that make for a good separation point. It's also preferable to paint crashing waves and ripples at the base of their respective objects, because if something is changed later then it can be done easily and all at once rather than bouncing between multiple layers.



Shortcuts
Copy merged
Cmd+Shift+C (Mac)
Ctrl+Shift+C (PC)
Copies the selection from all layers. Useful for merging areas of transparency.



7 Adding colour

I begin adding dozens of layers above my four existing ones. First is usually a solid Overlay layer of sepia. The specific colour isn't important because it generally gets painted over, but this makes a good starting point. Above that will be a series of layers including Color, Darken, Lighten and Overlay modes as well as Hue/Saturation, Levels and Curves Adjustment Layers. There's no specific order here – for now it's about getting the colours to a spot I'm pleased with. I'll use huge, soft, Round brushes almost exclusively here, and tend to group many layers together painting out parts of them all at once through masks.

8 Merging layers

To merge my collection of layers while retaining my original four, I select all the upper layers and group them. Starting with the highest of my four originals, I Cmd+left-click the layer's thumbnail to select its active pixels. Then using Edit>Copy Merged first, I paste the contents into a new layer. I move that layer above the group that was created and hide it, as well as hiding the layer the selection was made from. I do the same thing for the next two layers. On the fourth, everything within the group and below can be merged into one. There are now four layers containing all the same colours and adjustments from when I had 50 layers, but with the same footprints as my originals.



9 Atmosphere

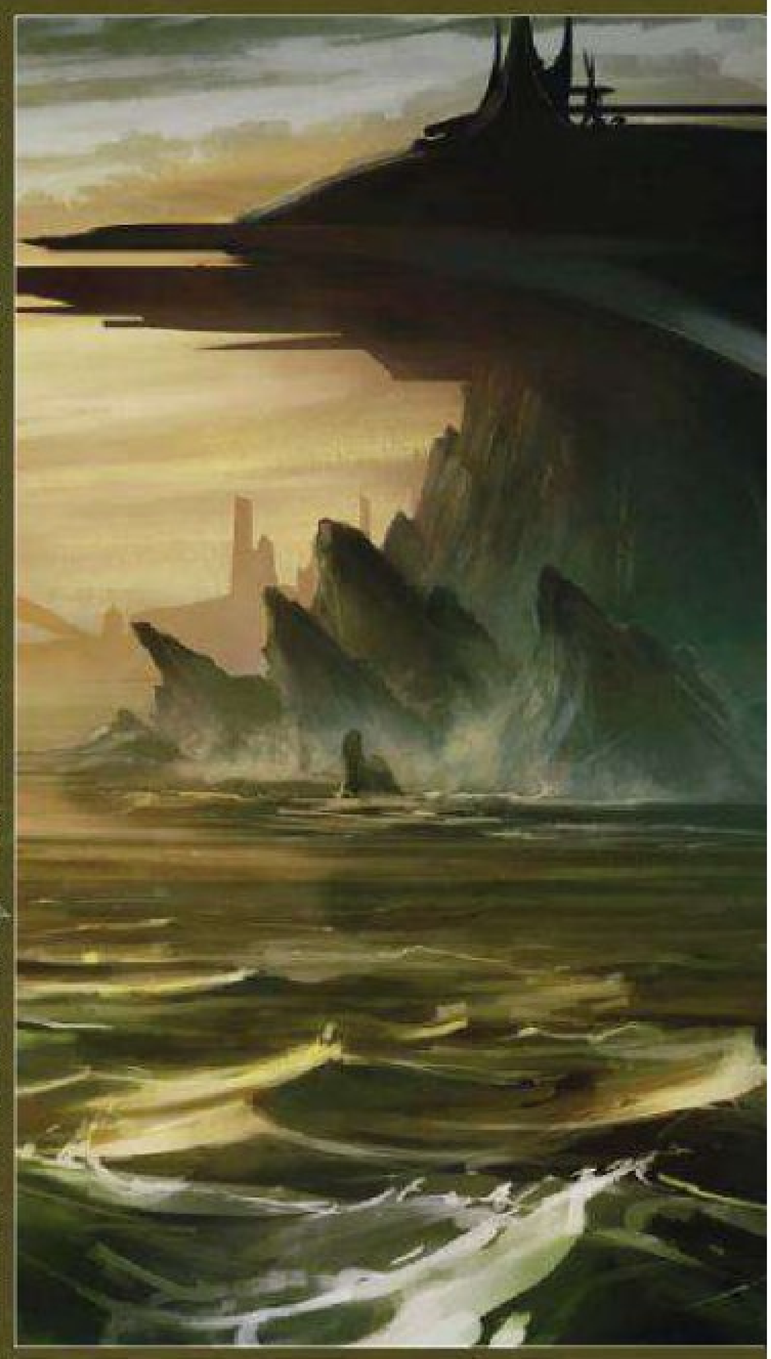
The colours are settling into a palette I like, so I begin lightly brushing over the structure's base to add a sense of atmospheric perspective. Generally it's best to sample sky colours for this, so it's usually blues and greys instead of red. Large objects affected by atmosphere will appear darker at the top than at their base. This is because of the amount of particles in the air between you and that object. The atmosphere is thinnest when you look directly up, out towards space, whereas it becomes denser closer to the horizon because you're looking around the Earth and through that much more atmosphere. I chose to accentuate the effect by adding thick mist surrounding the rocks.

10 Fixing the colour

Looking back, it's clear that the reds are far too intense, especially in and around the base of the structure. Using colour from the water instead, I try to cover them up with greens, while leaving a hint of warmth to help round out the structure of those rocks. The benefit to backtracking in such a manner is that those areas become full of subtle colour variations, which eventually make for a rich finish.

11 Refining the structure

I've kept the structure free of detail because I knew it would be affected by shadow and atmosphere. Even still, I'm regretting not working more on the design in my preliminary phases. I like to keep my image working as a whole and on the same level detail-wise as it progress, yet the perspective and large prongs have suffered from serious neglect.







12 Refining the water

Waves are a physical representation of pure energy. It can be tricky to reproduce something so chaotic, so this is where reference becomes important. Looking at your own photos is always best: having peered through the lens it's possible to recall details that might not be apparent in the photo. With water especially, I've also found it helpful to look at other artists such as Ivan Aivazovsky and how they've managed to capture the impossible. Note where the light source is, and make sure waves are wrapping around and dipping into each other rather than following a simple W shape across one plane.



13 Adjust the colours

Looking at the work of other artists for help with the water convinced me to revisit my colours. Again painting on top of all my layers, I'm using big, soft Round brushes in Overlay mode and sweeping straight across the sky with transparent whites and bright yellows. A red silhouette colour now works much better on the structure as it gradually fades into green. I'm confident about the design of the building after integrating more curves into the dome portion. I'll continue painting soft colours into it with my Standard brush, trying to perfect the atmospheric perspective.

14 Nudge the elements

Merging back down to my four original layers, I've decided that the structure needs to be moved higher. It's a small thing, but helps the gradation of waves read better and ensures the building sits in front of the clouds and city in a way that feels less contrived. I'm also working on adding implied detail to the backside of the structure and the distant city.



ON THE DVD

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: STANDARD



I use this brush during most of my time painting. It handles closer to a traditional brush and tends to give surfaces a soft, lightly textured look.

CUSTOM BRUSH: GRUNGE



This brush works great for getting down an initial texture on many surfaces, or for creating random shapes ideal for water splashes.



15 On the rock

It's darkly silhouetted against the sun, so the rock doesn't require much work. Some texture, mist and softer edges and it's almost done. The wave crashing into it was looking too dark and certainly benefits from the same translucency as in the big wave. Both painting and erasing with my grunge brush around the edges of the wave helps achieve the effect of spraying water.



16 The home stretch

Once again above of all my layers I'm making slight changes with Adjustment Layers, adding glowing light from the sun where appropriate, and hitting all areas at once trying to bring everything together into one unified image. I'm working on one last detail pass over the waves and hitting the dips with nice dark overlays to give them some more weight.

PRO SECRETS

Everyday skies

The sky is something that everyone sees on a regular basis. If it doesn't look right in your image then people will notice it, even without recognising what's wrong. As such, it's important to use reference materials whenever possible. You need to think about altitude, weather, humidity, temperature and time of day when designing your clouds, because those are all factors seen in real life.

17 Finishing the water

The waves were getting too busy in areas so I've smoothed them out where the focus was scrambled, particularly in the shadow behind the rock. Some more detail in the foam, and at long last a final pass on the splash of water rising from the translucent wave.

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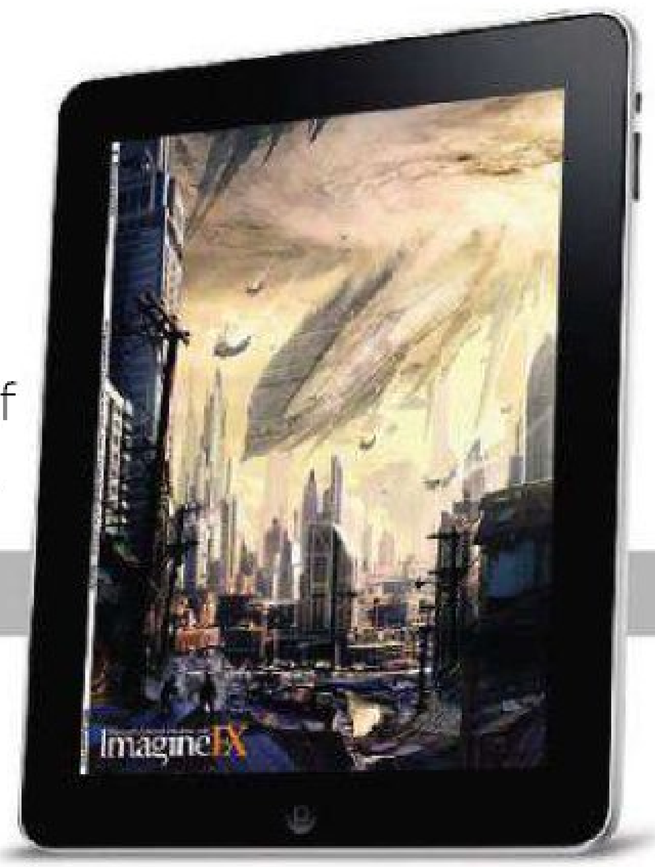


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Photoshop

SHOW A FUTURISTIC BATTLEFIELD VISTA

Adam Kuczek applies his concept art skills to depict a threatening situation in a post-apocalyptic war zone

Artist PROFILE

Adam Kuczek
COUNTRY: Poland



Adam's a concept artist and a digital matte painter. He specialises in sci-fi and fantasy.
www.ak-art.net

DVD Assets
The workshop files are on the DVD in the Adam Kuczek folder.

Post-apocalyptic imagery is a cornerstone of countless sci-fi movies and comic books. Being a fan of this genre, end-of-the-world elements often find their way into my art. Now it's time for my version of a moody, dark battlefield in a spirit of the Terminator films; one filled with burning cars and debris, with a few brave survivors facing an indestructible opponent.

The objective here is to create a cinematic snapshot, if you will, so I extend the canvas and make it more panoramic. I also select a bunch of textures and photo scraps of rubble to incorporate into the image, giving it more of a realistic feel. I often use simple matte painting techniques and because it's a concept piece I don't have to be so precise – something that's vital for a finished matte painting.

It's clear I need a focal point and I consider a big machine in the foreground. However, as I lay down the first rough strokes, I notice it creates a good place for something big and menacing emerging from the dusty background. Eventually, a large robot appears, towering above the ruined buildings, scanning the surroundings for survivors. I choose not to reveal it completely, only indicating its size and intentions.

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Gotcha!

Elements from photos of an excavator helped the robotic look. With photo scraps, desaturate them, decrease the opacity and don't refine distant elements too much.

Epic scale

To imply the size of the robot without painting extra details I use the panoramic vista, a soldier in the bottom right-hand corner, the distant buildings and the robot's head almost going out of the frame. Use familiar items, like cars, to quickly establish the scale.

How I create...

AN ATMOSPHERIC BATTLEFIELD



1 Colour and light

I start with very rough, broad brushes to establish the general composition and colour palette. At this stage everything's very loose. I add a couple of brighter spots that I soon change into spotlights. Because of the nature of the image, I don't add any strong key light, instead making the two reflectors the brightest elements and focal point.



2 Dirty job

The battlefield's no picnic site so I add plenty of dirt and debris, as if a few bombs have just exploded and filled the air with thick dust and pieces of rubble. The base 'dirt layer' is created using a couple of explosion photos overlayed on top of the upper part of the image and then overpainted. Small chunks of falling wreckage are added with a custom brush.



3 Special effects

To finish up, I use a few frames from practical presets footage with fire and charges, where the effect is filmed on a black background. I use Screen mode to blend them into the painting and make sure no part of the painting remains clean. For this kind of scene, the more the grunge feel, the better. Don't forget about a subtle grain layer at the end, to unify the whole thing.

ON THE DVD

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

SOFTWARE

CUSTOM BRUSHES: DUST BRUSH



Good with Opacity set to pressure, to add haze and distant smoke.

DIRT BRUSH



A simple brush for adding pieces of debris and general roughness.

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EPIC ART

Photoshop

GET EPIC RESULTS WITH TEXTURES

VIDEO WORKSHOP ON REGEN

Emmanuel Malin explores the use of textures, how to sculpt them with light, and mixes them with a balance of organic and graphic shapes

Artist **PROFILE**

Emmanuel Malin

COUNTRY: France



After some years spent working in the video games industry as an art director, Emmanuel's now a freelance concept designer and illustrator. **www.emmanuelmalin.com**

DVD Assets

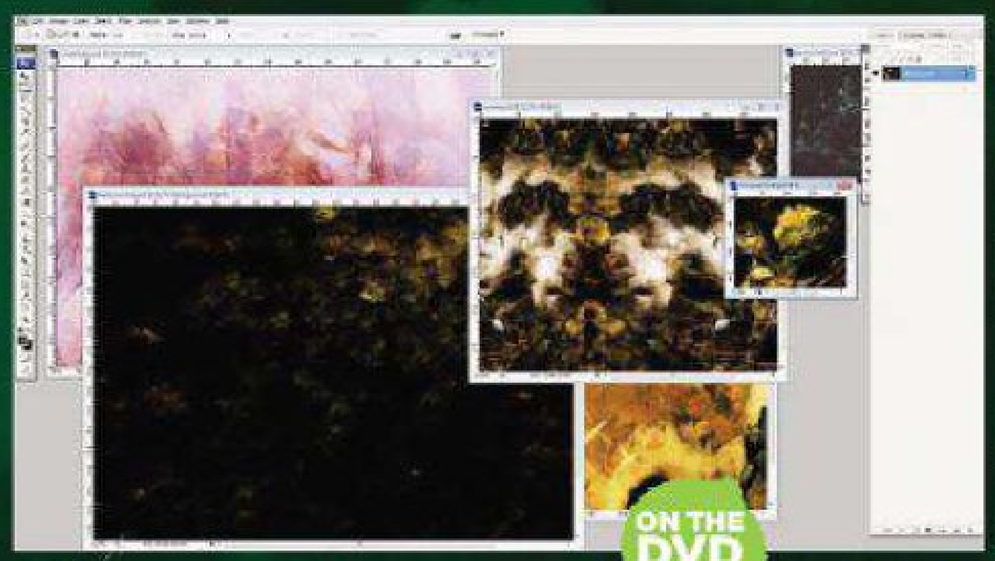
The files you need are on your DVD in the Emmanuel Malin folder in Workshops.

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I want to tell you the story of an ancient tree, a door to an eerie world of wonders waiting in a dark forest for someone to open it. I'll explore this story by painting with the Clone stamp in Photoshop, using several files of textures that I'll combine while taking care to balance my use of organic shapes, sharp edges, smooth brushes and a cutting light from Overlay layers and the Curves tool.

I keep my story in mind at every stage of the painting: it's important to stay focused on the picture you're creating. Try to make every brush stroke or layer relevant, rather than employ a particular art technique just because it might be fun to see what happens. This is why I like to explore the chaos and randomness of textures. Working out how to deal with them keeps the mind alert when thinking how to tell the story while painting the image.

In this workshop I've chosen to work from dark to light. It's my favourite way to paint, by building silhouettes and then breaking them to make light appear. I love working with light and paint effects, and a Curves adjustment layer is my favourite means of applying colours carefully and then editing the mask. I'll demonstrate this technique during the creation of this image.



ON THE DVD

1 Getting ready

Before I even create a new file for the picture, I choose a selection of textures that I'll use throughout the process, which match the theme of the image. I plan to paint a dark, mossy and eerie forest, so my textures folder contains suitable imagery in terms of objects and colours. Throughout the whole process I'll keep them open and ready to use.

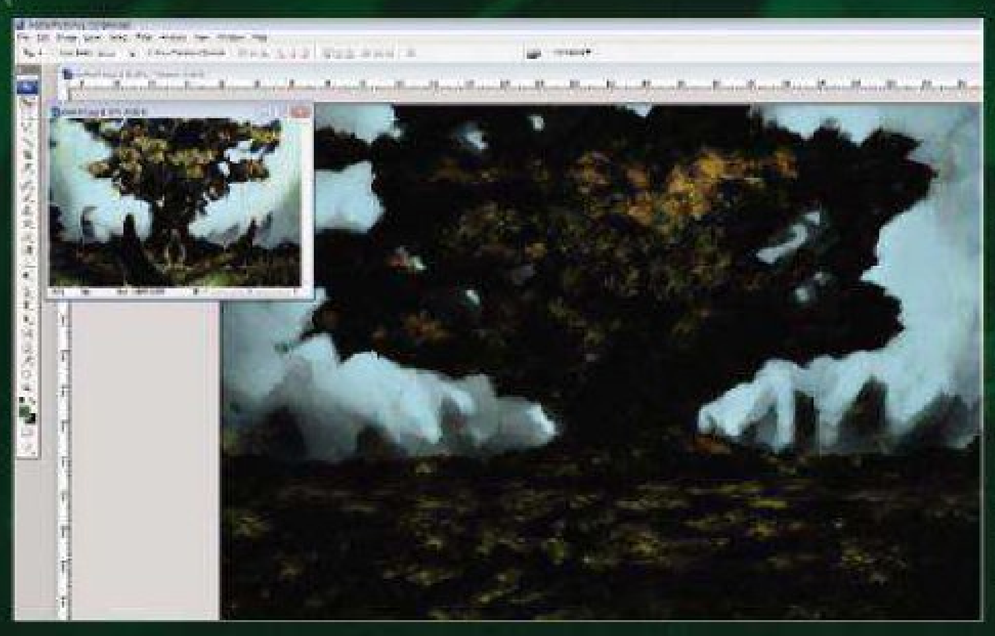


2 The sketch

I use a couple of textures to first draw a quick sketch, using the Clone stamp for the most part. Painting a sketch not only helps me decide on the composition and key colours, it's also a way of seeing how some textures will react with others, enabling me to find combinations that work. I'm always adding to my texture bank and trying them out, hoping to stumble across combinations that work. I call these my lucky accidents!

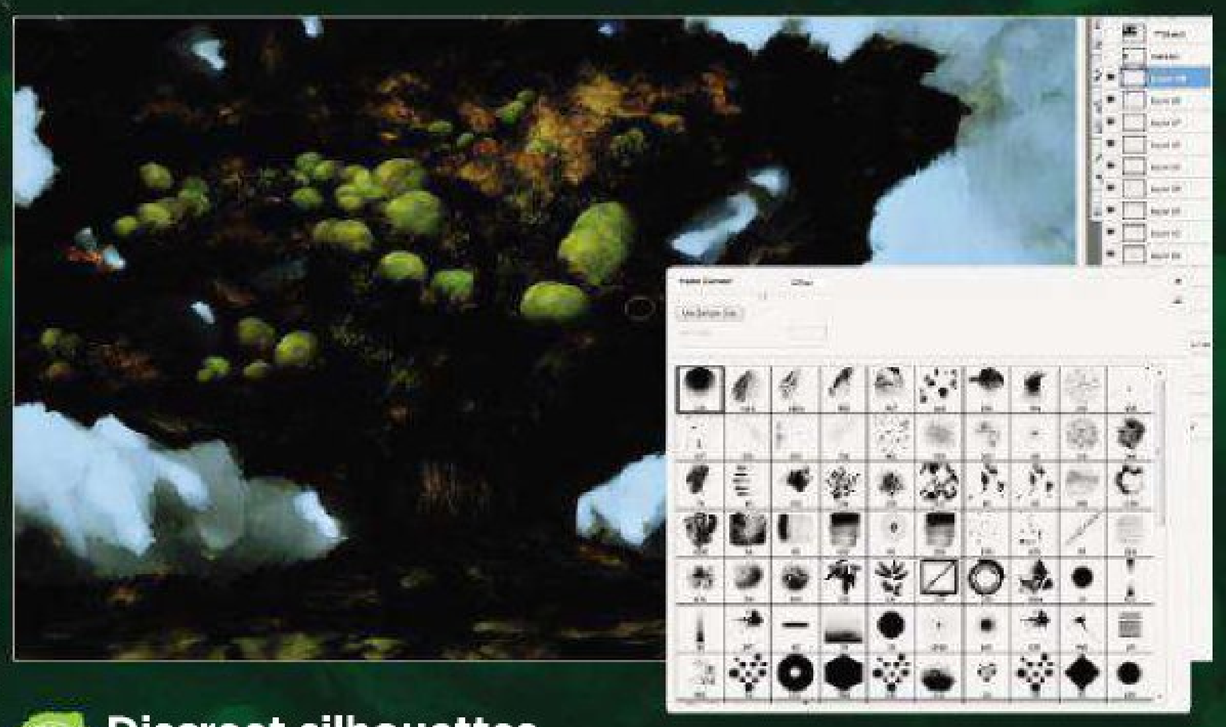
3 Sculpting the scene

I always keep an eye on my initial sketch during the early stages of any painting, using it as a reference for shapes and colours that I directly pick from. I roughly fill my workspace with a very dark texture that I sculpt with blue light. This is a very loose step – I just want to set up the essential elements: the foreground, main object/mass and background, while nailing my light and structure choice.



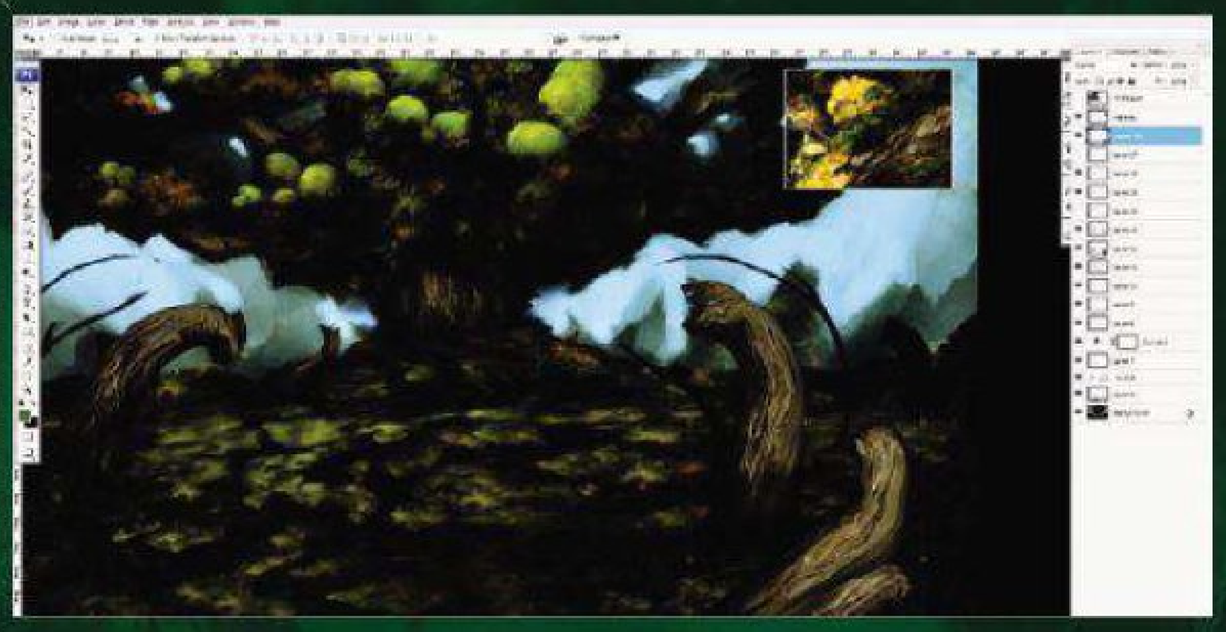
4 Defining textures

I work on some mossy areas that'll add character to the scene. I mainly use only two brushes – one hard and one soft – and because I want a specific stroke I pick a brush that'll produce the round, graphic shapes I'm after. This way I can quickly define areas of interest in the picture, and intensify the key colour green to convey the story. For the rest of the image I use several textures and play with them using the Clone stamp.



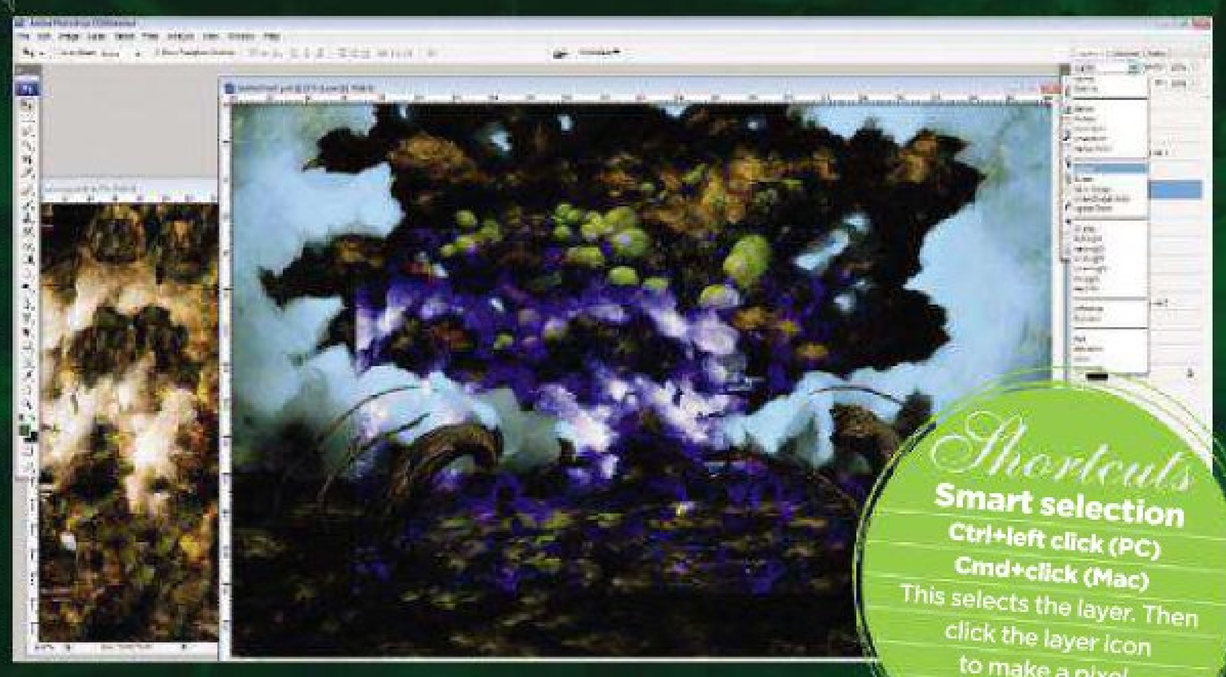
5 Discreet silhouettes

Now I start working the foreground, adding dead trees to it. I first paint silhouettes, drawing them in groups before refining them to achieve the right movement and overall composition, because I want the tree in the central space to be the centre of attention. When I'm happy with the silhouettes, I give them volume using the Clone stamp and hard brush. Because they're only a side element I keep them discreet, using browns, greys and reds. The focal point needs to be green, brown and blue.



6 Bringing in colours

I need to make the dark areas more interesting so I add some colour noise to them. I pick another texture file and paste it into the workspace, then set the Layer mode to Lighten. Then I just have to play with the layer, changing colours using Curves Adjustment layers and Hue/Saturation. With the Eraser tool and Clone stamp, I channel the chaos of the texture and make it come alive in the picture.



WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

RANDOM FOG

This brush is great for building foggy effects. Using it alongside other smooth-edge brushes you can create a range of smoke effects, from an aggressive and edgy spiral to a soft and discreet curtain.

PRO SECRETS

Get some perspective

Take breaks every two hours. Walk away from your work for 20 minutes and come back with a fresh eye. Flipping your image helps you to spot mistakes, and ask friends for their opinions of work-in-progress. Burying yourself in your art is neither helpful nor particularly healthy.

Shortcuts

Smart selection

Ctrl+left click (PC)

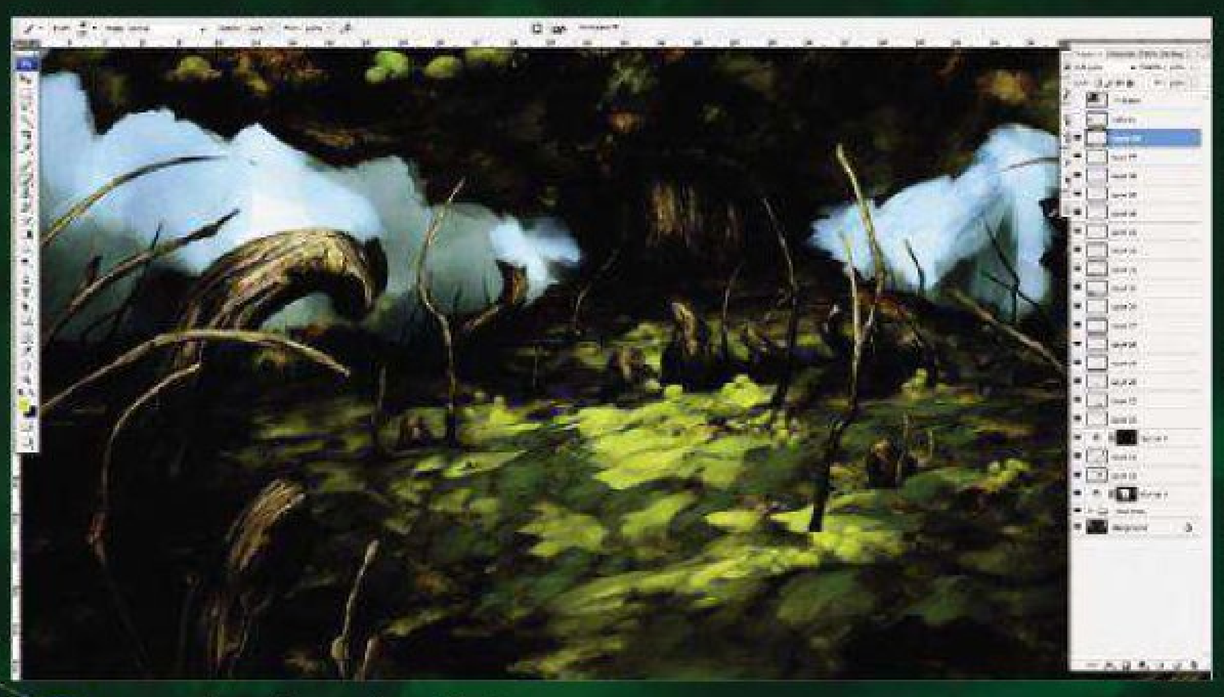
Cmd+click (Mac)

This selects the layer. Then click the layer icon to make a pixel selection.

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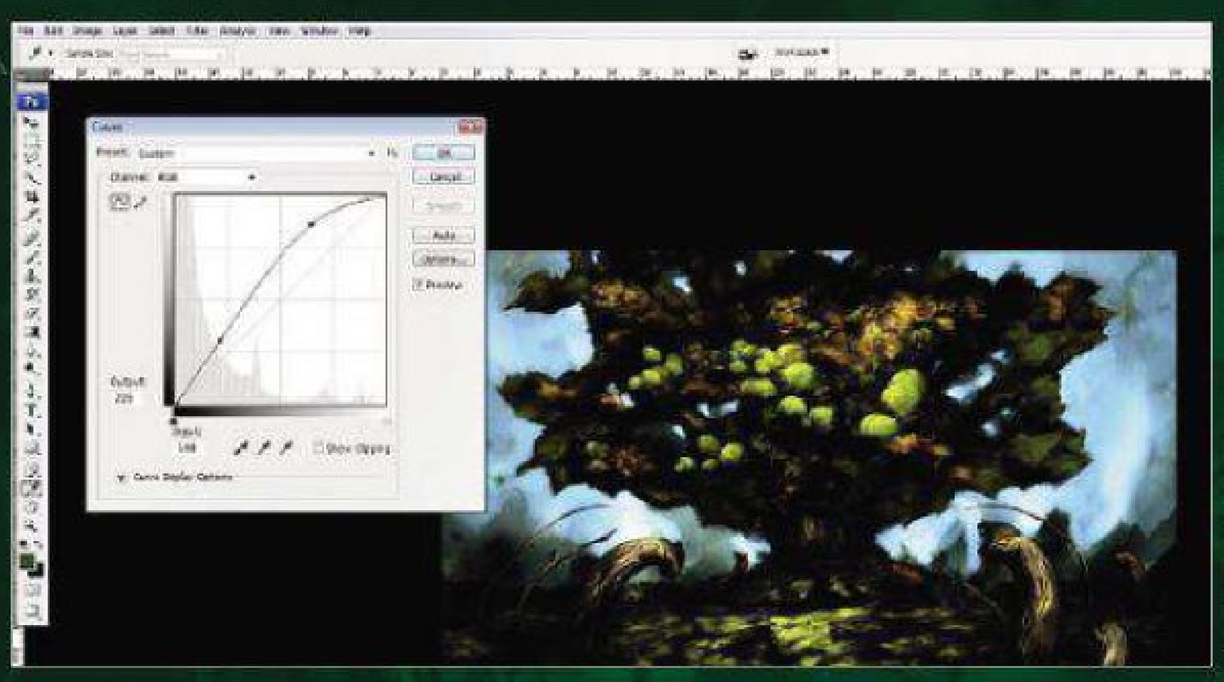


7 Emphasise the light

The scene is now detailed enough to properly light. I want the main spots to be on the middle of the foreground, the mossy mass of the tree and the backlight, which makes the central composition more interesting. I introduce a new Curves layer, which I set up to exaggerate the light. Then with the Eraser I remove from the layer mask the areas I want to keep dark and mysterious. Then I add an Overlay layer and with a light green colour I finish painting the light, pushing the contrast.

8 Details and patchwork

Now I can start zooming into the picture and work on the details. I add some mossy areas to the ground with the same brushes I used before, to make the tree and its environment consistent. I want to give a patchwork feeling, providing visual information as if it were going to be a game tile-set. I use the randomness of the textured ground to find shapes of the patchwork, playing with colours and contrast. I also add details to the overall scene, with more branches, rocks and dead trees.



9 Particle fun

To give the tree a character of its own, I add floating particles of bright light that'll reinforce its supernatural nature. This is a chaotic moment in my painting process: I go wild with the layers and create lots of particles, copying/pasting them with Gaussian blur and Overlay mode. Each particle is made of several layers, and this is another instance when I use a standard brush to introduce small dots of lights here and there.



10 A story to tell

I add another group of particles layers in Overlay mode to the ground to tie it in with the rest of the scene, and then paint some touches of bold greens and reds. This adds the final storytelling elements: the upper, eerie tree part and the dead foreground are now separated by a plain crimson door. It becomes the centre of attention and a link between these two worlds – the tree entity versus the world that's surrounding it.

PRO SECRETS

Stay organised

When I worked on video games I had to ensure that my art was organised so that my team members could adjust elements easily. Layers management became crucial: naming them and grouping them accordingly. It always seems a chore at the time, but comes in very handy when you've got to work on a specific element in the image.

Shortcuts

Flatten version

Shift+Alt+Open (PC)
Shift+Apple+Open (Mac)
Photoshop will open a flattened version of your file.



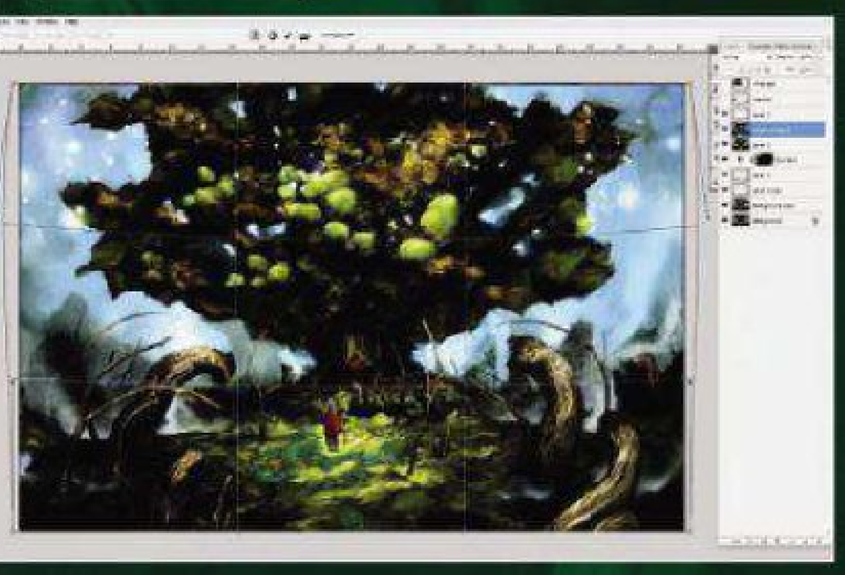
11 Final addition of smoke

I want to make the separation between the foreground and background more subtle. A good trick is to add smoke, which will also make the atmosphere even more gloomy and mysterious. I use a custom brush to paint the smoke in almost horizontal lines that play between the different tree layers. I've kept each dead tree in a separate layer, because I knew I would do this kind of trick!

12 The character

To complete the story I paint a person on a new layer. I build the silhouette, sculpt it and then add details. He's green and red to make the link between the foreground (the world) and the red door (the magical tree). I don't use textures to paint either him or the door – I try to find a balance with more graphic elements and plain key colours that divide the piece and create more happy accidents while the eyes runs over the image.





13 One last tweak

The composition is pretty static, with its central focus and horizontal lines. I need to bring more dynamism to the image, so I click Edit>Transform>Warp and modify the image. The distortion will break the straightness of the composition lines and introduce movement. I finish with a couple of little curves modifications that only I will probably notice, and then I'm pretty much finished!

SketchBook Pro

GET HANDS-ON WITH YOUR iPAD

So, you've bought yourself an iPad and installed the SketchBook Pro app. Now start creating great fantasy art with **Mathieu Reynès's** help

There are several painting apps available for the iPad, such as Brushes, ArtStudio and ArtRage, and although they all have their good points, I feel more comfortable with SketchBook Pro.

This app looks like a light version of Photoshop. (I don't know the standard version of SketchBook Pro, so I can't compare it with the iO's version.) There are some disadvantages: the number of layers is limited to six; there's no Selection tool; there's no way to adjust Hue/Saturation; and there's no pressure sensitivity on the iPad screen. These downsides don't frustrate me, however. Because of the technical simplifications, digital painting with an iPad is both fun and intuitive. Think of it as painting traditionally on a digital canvas.

Artist PROFILE

Mathieu Reynès
COUNTRY: France



After several years working in science, Mathieu's now a freelance illustrator, comic artist and comic writer.
mathieureynes.blogspot.com

DVD Assets
The files you need are on your DVD in the Mathieu Reynès folder in Workshops.

When I'm painting with the iPad, it doesn't really feel as if I'm working. I become less concerned about deadlines, for example – I'm not sitting in front of my PC in my work chair, but instead lounging on my couch. For me, the iPad is more like an electronic sketchbook that I can bring along anywhere and use any time, any place, rather than a proper work tool or laptop.

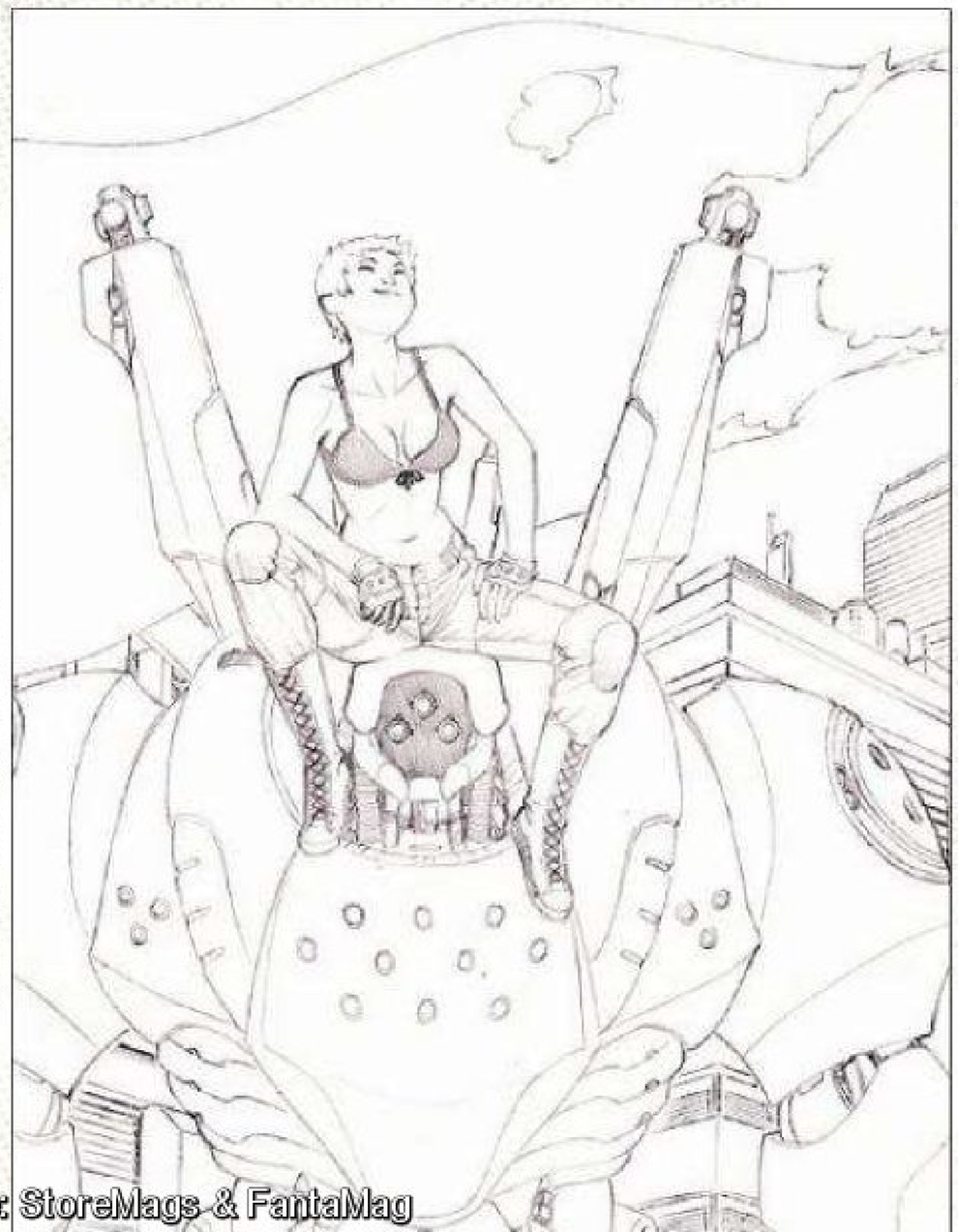


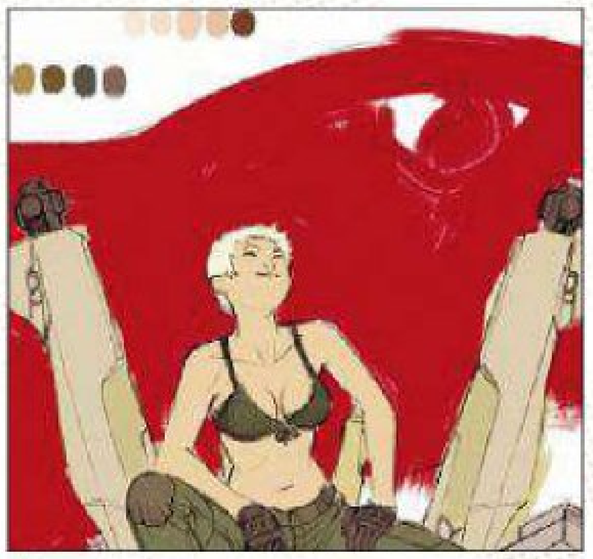
1 The rough sketch

All of my drawings start with a rough sketch, which enables me to go over the general idea and finalise the composition and how the image will be framed. I then move on to a cleaner and more detailed version of the pencil sketch. I prefer doing these steps on paper because I'm more comfortable with a pencil than with a graphic tablet. I scan this image, scale it to the iPad's resolution (768x1,024 pixels) and email it to my iPad.

2 Working on the pencil sketch

On the first transparent sheet, I copy my pencil sketch from the Camera Roll. I put this layer in Multiply mode: white areas turn transparent and my pencil line stays visible above lower layers. Using the Pencil tool, I add a few buildings as a background and reduce the girl's hair. You can work with your finger on the iPad or with a stylus adapted to touchscreens. I use a homemade stylus (see overleaf).







3 Applying the first level of colours

I add a layer under the line-drawn one. On this colour layer I'll roughly define different elements and areas of interest, and decide on the general colour scheme of the picture. I use a large brush and a high level of opacity. This enables me to obtain an immediate preview of the final result, even if I know there'll be changes along the way.

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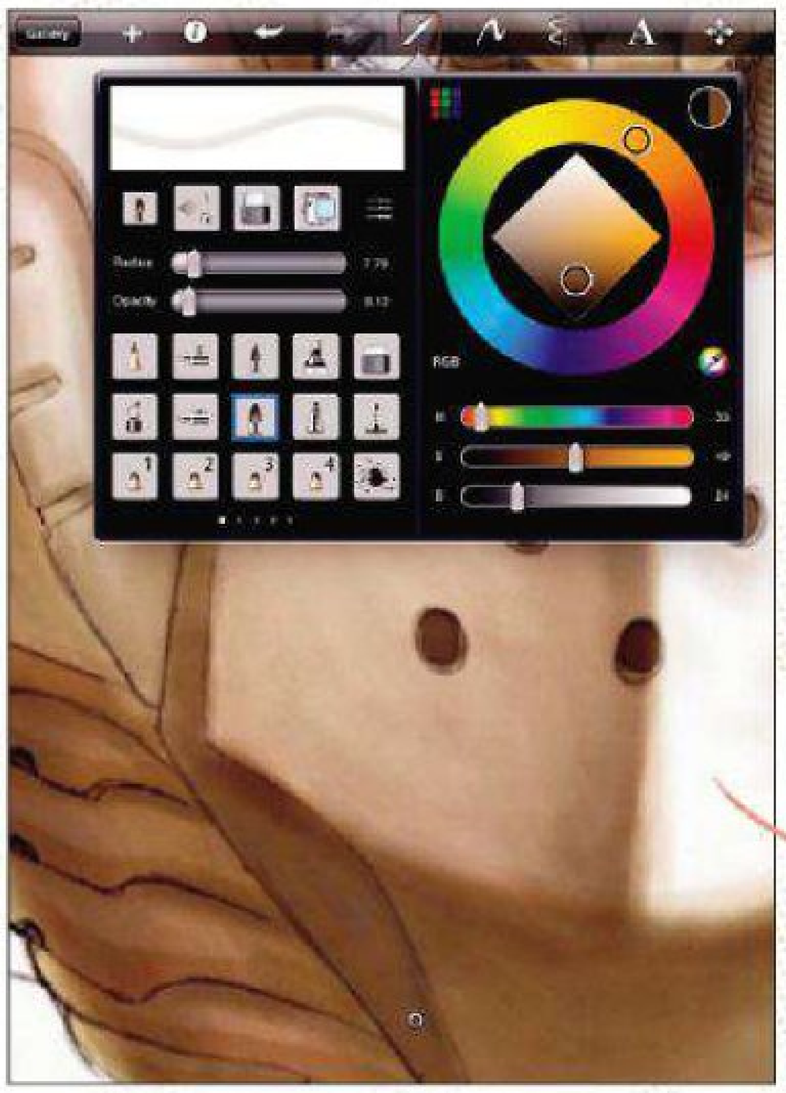


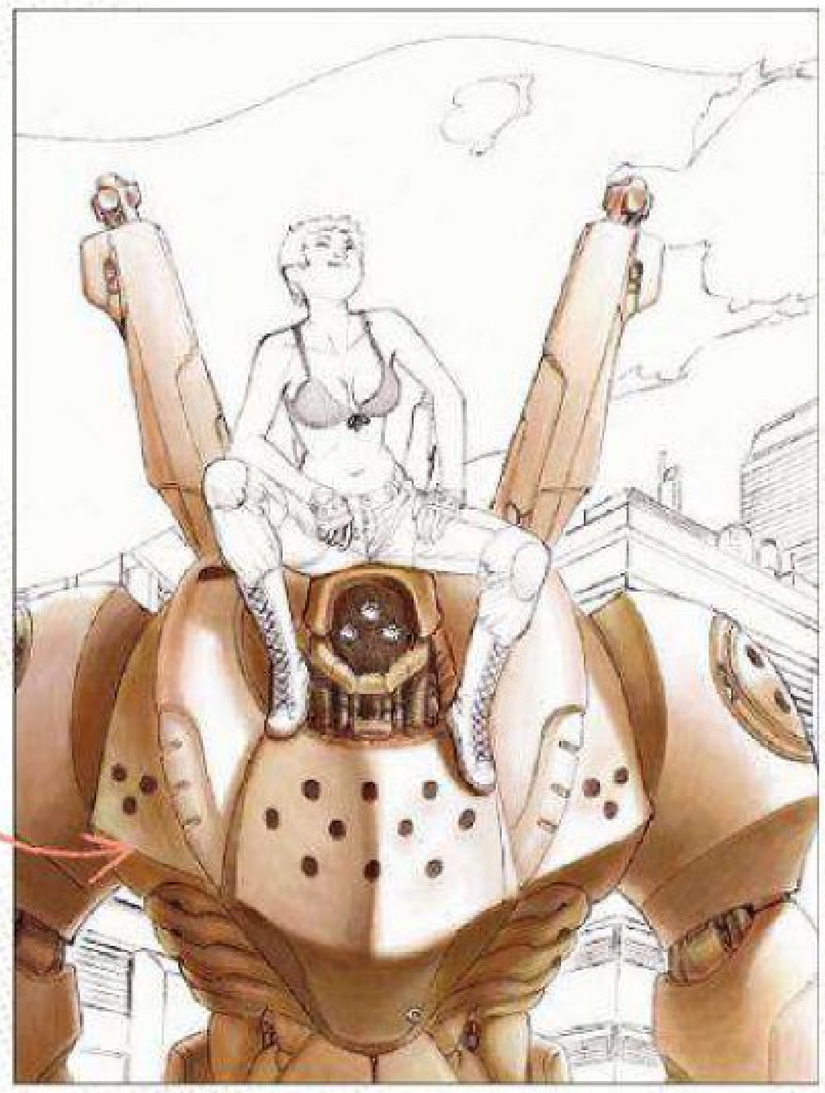
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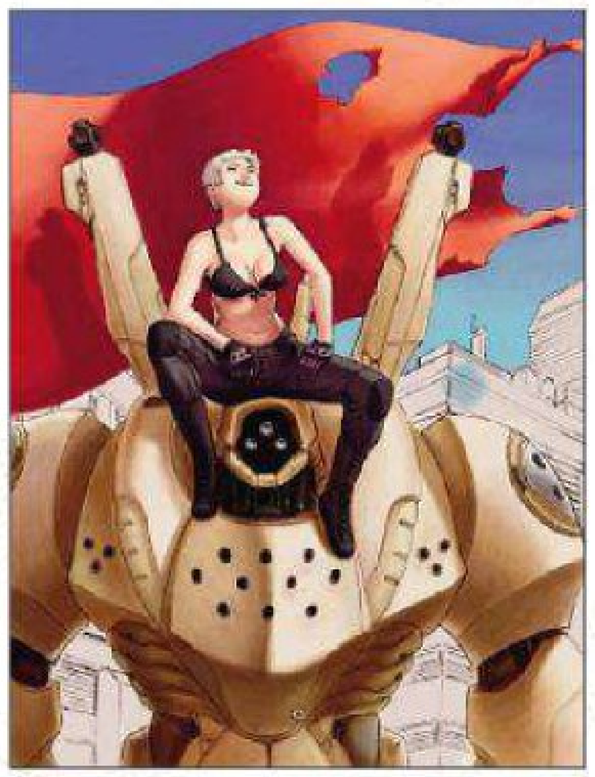
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4 Shadows and volumes

I work with shadows and volumes on a Multiply layer. My light source is top-right and so I place the shadows accordingly. I use a brush with a slight texture and lower the opacity to create smooth transitions between colours as I build shapes. How you draw those shapes defines their surface aspect: a soft shade indicates a smooth surface, while a harsher colour hints at a rougher surface. I apply tints to create more realistic-looking shadows. I then add other Multiply layers above to group the shadows if I want to darken some areas, while keeping the different hues of light in the layers below.







7 Painting the sky

On another sheet, placed between the colour layer and the flag layer, I start work on the sky. If I'd been better organised the sky would be the lowest layer. I should have worked it on a separate layer from the beginning. Generally I try to separate and organise the various stages of the image on different layers, working from the background to the foreground. With a wide brush I paint a blue gradient, using a low opacity to mix a deep blue with a light turquoise. I add a few clouds using the greys with a tinge of yellow to make the light look warmer.

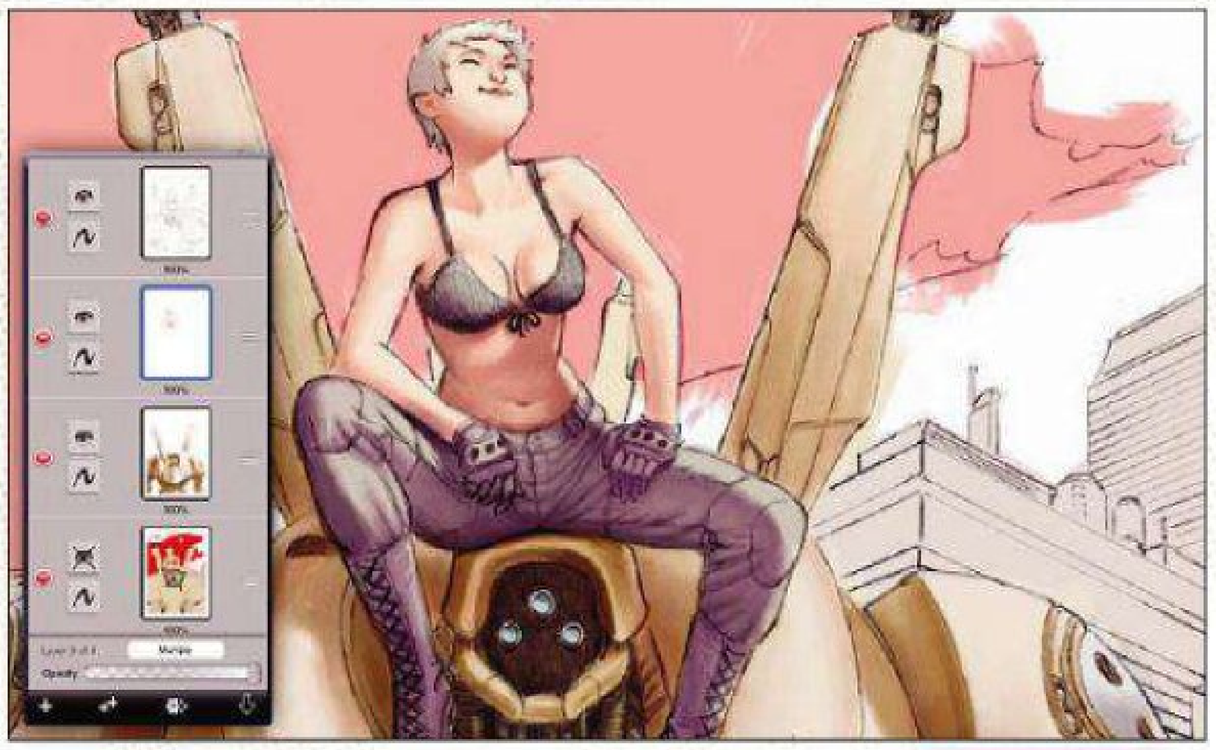
Make your own stylus



I've tested several different models of stylus for the iPad, but it's my home-made one that glides the best on the screen. For the body, I used a part of a radio antenna, but you can use any metal rod you want. For the head I cut a piece from a yellow sponge, after verifying that it's conductive even when it's dry. To do this simply touch the screen with it. If it doesn't react then try another sponge (I think mine was made by Scotch-Brite). Fix the sponge to the metal body using adhesive or sticky tape, leaving at least 5mm of the sponge exposed to ensure it's detected by the iPad.

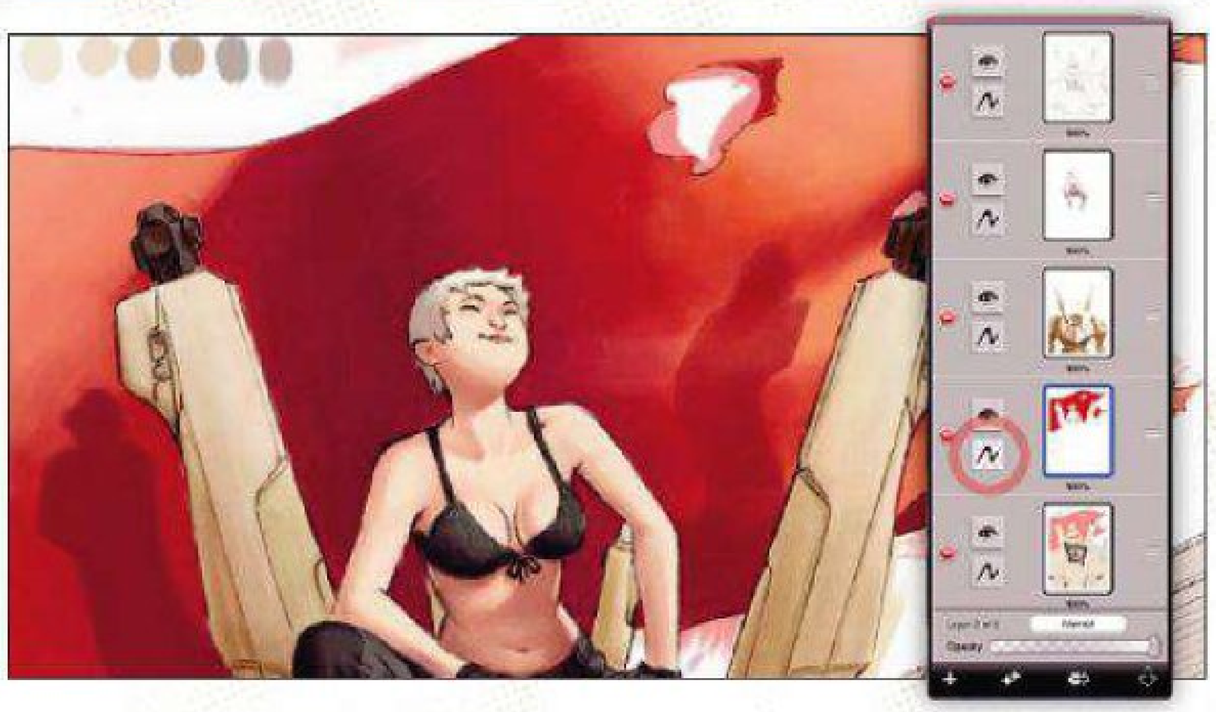
5 Back to the colour layer

Once I'm finished with my shadows, I merge the shadow layers to limit the number of sheets and save some memory space. I advise you to save your work regularly in case the application crashes, which unfortunately happens rather too often for my liking. Now I can resume work on my Colour Sheet. The general colour scheme looks too dense and dark now, so I have to reduce the opacity of the layer to achieve softer colours for the robot and the girl. I clean the colours and take the opportunity to tidy up the image by erasing anything that's outside my line art.



6 Using Preserve Transparency

I'm happy with the progress I've made with the robot and the girl, so now it's time to work on the background, much of which is taken up by a tattered red flag. I first establish another layer for the flag before creating a solid red area that defines its general shape. I then make use of SketchBook Pro's Preserve Transparency function, which enables me to lock transparent zones. I can now only paint on the flag, which makes direct work on shadows and volumes on this layer really convenient.



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8 The buildings

On a new sheet, positioned above the sky layer (I'm trying to be more logical this time), the buildings are defined using a solid colour, and the transparency is locked so my work area is restricted to those buildings. I select light, plain colours so that this background won't attract too much attention. I create a sharply delineated shadow to suggest bright light. I don't try to create smooth-looking surfaces, instead giving them the roughness of concrete.

9 Colouring the sketch

To make the pencil drawing merge with the colours I'm going to tint it. I put a layer in Screen mode above my pencil layer after changing it to Normal mode. The colour used on the screen layer modifies the shades of grey of my drawing lines. This layer is then merged into the pencil layer and the first version is set to Multiply mode. The lines don't seem dense enough to me, so I duplicate this layer and merge them again.

PRO SECRETS

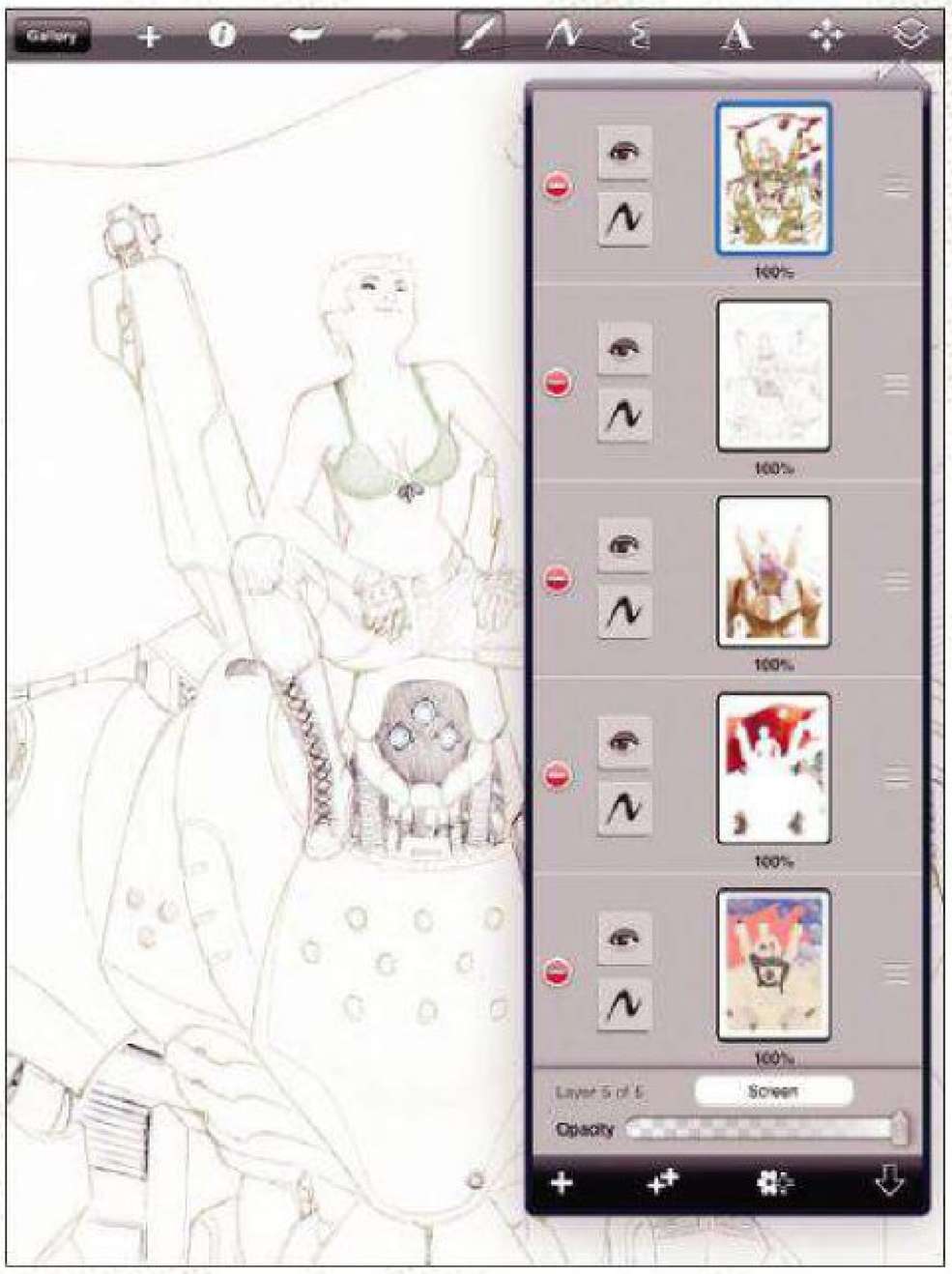
Use shortcuts

With SketchBook Pro you can assign shortcuts to the screen. I use Undo and Last Brush the most, and the latter is really useful for switching quickly from your brush to the Eraser.

PRO SECRETS

Quickly paint and erase

If you want your paintbrush to become an eraser that retains the same properties as the brush, tap and hold on the screen until the Colour Picker appears and make it glide quickly outside the screen before release. To turn it back into a Colour brush, select a colour with the Colour Picker.





10 Adding gloss and highlights

On a new layer above all the others, I add a few strokes of light and gloss to make some shapes gleam – the metal of the mecha or the leather of the kneepads – and make the eyes of the machine brighter. Some light areas on the girl's skin and clothes are made lighter to introduce more volume and light.

11 Flag and tattoos to finish

On a new layer, again above all the others, I paint the ImagineFX logo, making it follow the movement of the flag. Layer transparency is then locked and the parts subjected to bright light are made lighter with a brush using a low level of opacity to achieve smooth transitions. There's still something missing – the character needs some more personality. How about a few tattoos? These are painted on another Multiply sheet. Et voilà!



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ArtRage

GET MORE FROM ARTRAGE'S LAYERS

ImagineFX CORE SKILLS

Layers can be used to organise your workflow in ArtRage while providing nifty creative opportunities, as **Simon Dominic** explains

Layers are transparent canvases that can be worked on without affecting the rest of your image. Layers can be merged together, or with the canvas, at any time. If you're not happy with a layer you can simply delete it. This enables you to try out effects and compositions before committing yourself. Using Blend modes combined with Opacity settings, you can alter the colour and appearance of an existing image, or add subtle textures.

I find layers particularly useful in planning composition; I sketch each character on a separate layer, then move them around and resize them until I'm happy. Like most ArtRage features, layers are easy to get the hang of and the more you explore them the more cool features you'll find.

1 Get started

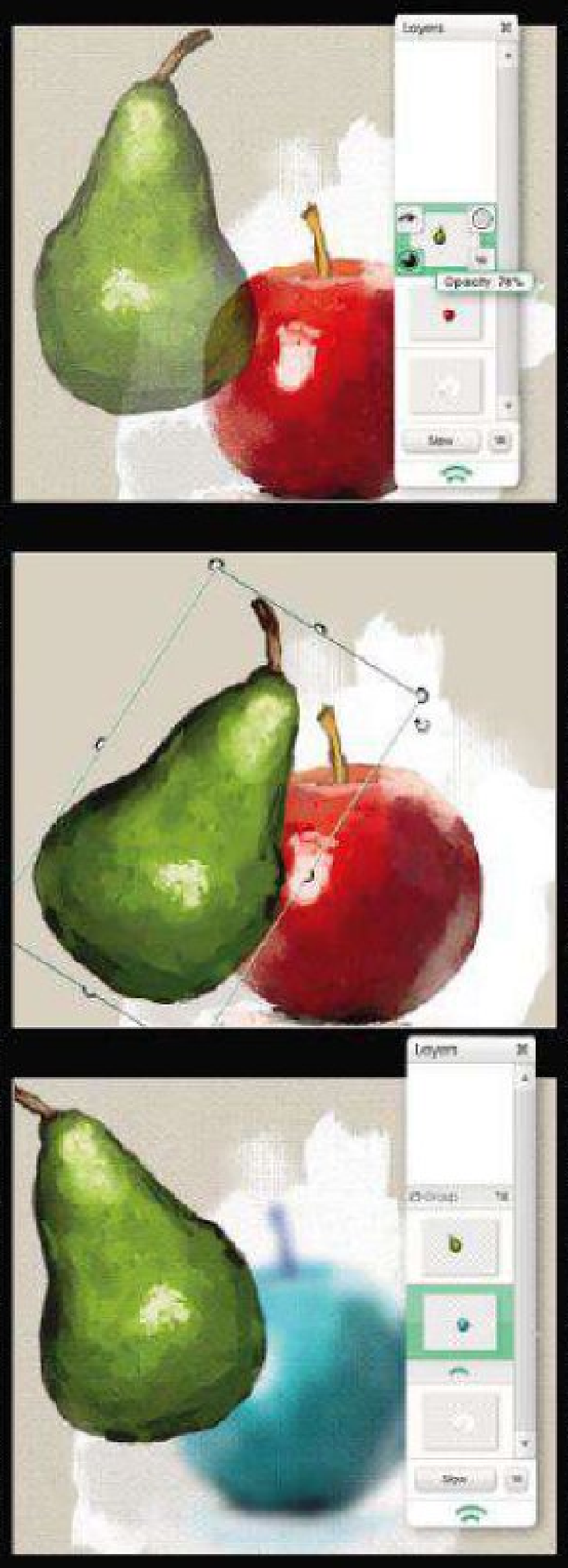
Choose View>Layer Panel. Select New to create a layer, and paint something. Move the cursor over the Layer icon, click Opacity and enter a value for transparency. Click Lock Transparency to allow painting only in areas you've already painted. Click the Visibility eye to make your Layer disappear and reappear. If you have multiple Layers, drag them up or down to alter their positions.

2 Move and transform layers

From the layer's Panel menu, choose Transform Layer Contents. Drag within the layer boundary to move the layer or drag the round tabs to resize. To rotate the layer, place your cursor on the boundary and, when it changes to a curved arrow, drag it. Try right-clicking within the boundary and Flip Horizontal or Flip Vertical. You can transform all layers at once using Edit>Transform All Layers.

3 Group and duplicate layers

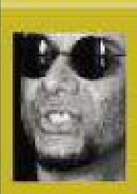
To merge a layer with the one below, use Merge Layer Down, and to create a copy, choose Duplicate Layer. You can group layers together by selecting Create Layer Group and dragging layers into that group, and transform all layers in a group with Transform Group Contents in the Group menu. Finally, try some special effects with Edit>Blur Layer and Edit>Adjust Layer Colors.



Artist PROFILE

Simon Dominic

COUNTRY: England



Simon is a self-taught professional illustrator who specialises in fantasy and horror. He's worked on game card art, covers and more.

www.painterly.co.uk

LAYERS PANEL



A. Create layer
Make a new layer.

B. The canvas
The canvas can't be deleted, but can be cleared or duplicated to a layer.

C. Grouped layers
A collapsible grouping option for organising your layers.

D. Group menu
Grouped layers options include Alter Blend Mode and Opacity.

E. Layer name
You can name your layers if you wish.

F. Layer menu
Options include Transform, Duplicate, Clear Contents and Set Blend Modes.



G. Normal layer
A non-grouped layer, the default option.

H. Lock transparency
This prevents painting onto the layer's blank areas.

I. Layer menu
The same as B, except you don't need to select the layer first.

J. Blend mode
A Blend Mode can be changed by clicking this icon.

K. Opacity
Click and enter value or click, hold and drag.

L. Visibility
Toggles your layer visible or invisible.

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Photoshop

QUICK WAYS TO BETTER PORTRAITS

VIDEO WORKSHOP ON THE DVD

Learn how to create eye-catching, painted artwork in less time than it takes to read this month's issue! **Kev Crossley** shows you how it's done

There's nothing more rewarding than finishing a piece of artwork, but more often than not this follows hours – sometimes days or even weeks – of hard work. The process of painting, in particular, can be an extended and arduous experience, taking between five and 40 hours to complete a single piece. It can take a lot out of you, and during especially busy times the joy can start to vanish from the art process, turning what should be fun into toil.

To combat this, I thought an interesting way to start each working day would be to spend around an hour producing a quick, colour sketch using Photoshop. This satisfied in a number of ways: it proved to be an excellent method of getting warmed up, and because such a sketch was so quick to produce I always felt invigorated and ready to hit the ground running afterwards. In addition, I learned a lot about the subject matter of the sketches; lessons that I could then go on to apply to my other art.

Artist PROFILE

Kev Crossley

COUNTRY: England



Kev worked for 14 years in the games industry, and has produced art for numerous books, comics and magazines.

www.kevcrossley.com

DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD in the Kev Crossley folder in Workshops.

To achieve artistic excellence requires not only hours of practice and study, but also the completion of numerous artworks. Each image you finish adds depth to the practical application of all your study and perseverance, and what better way to get lots of finished art behind you than to master the principle of the 60-minute sketch? Add to that the constant improvement in technique, colour knowledge, understanding of anatomy and use of light, and you have a very worthwhile exercise indeed.



1 Finding a source image

The photographs I work from include digital photographs taken of my television, scanned images from magazines or random internet pictures. deviantART is particularly useful because it features many superb photographers. For this workshop I've chosen a photograph called Savage Earth Heart 6 by Hakanphotography on dA. (there's more at **hakanphotography.com**). It's an expressive piece with an evocative, muted palette that'll suit what I've planned for my painting later on.

Shortcuts

Adjust your brush size

[or] (PC & Mac)

Use the square bracket keys to dynamically change the brush size as you work.

2 Adjusting the source

I want to produce a painting with a portrait-style orientation, so I crop the photograph and quickly paint in the top of the head, lower shoulders as well as extending the background. Because the original photograph was quite small, I increase the size to 3,000 pixels high. This will match the size of my painting canvas, providing me with enough room to add as much detail as required.





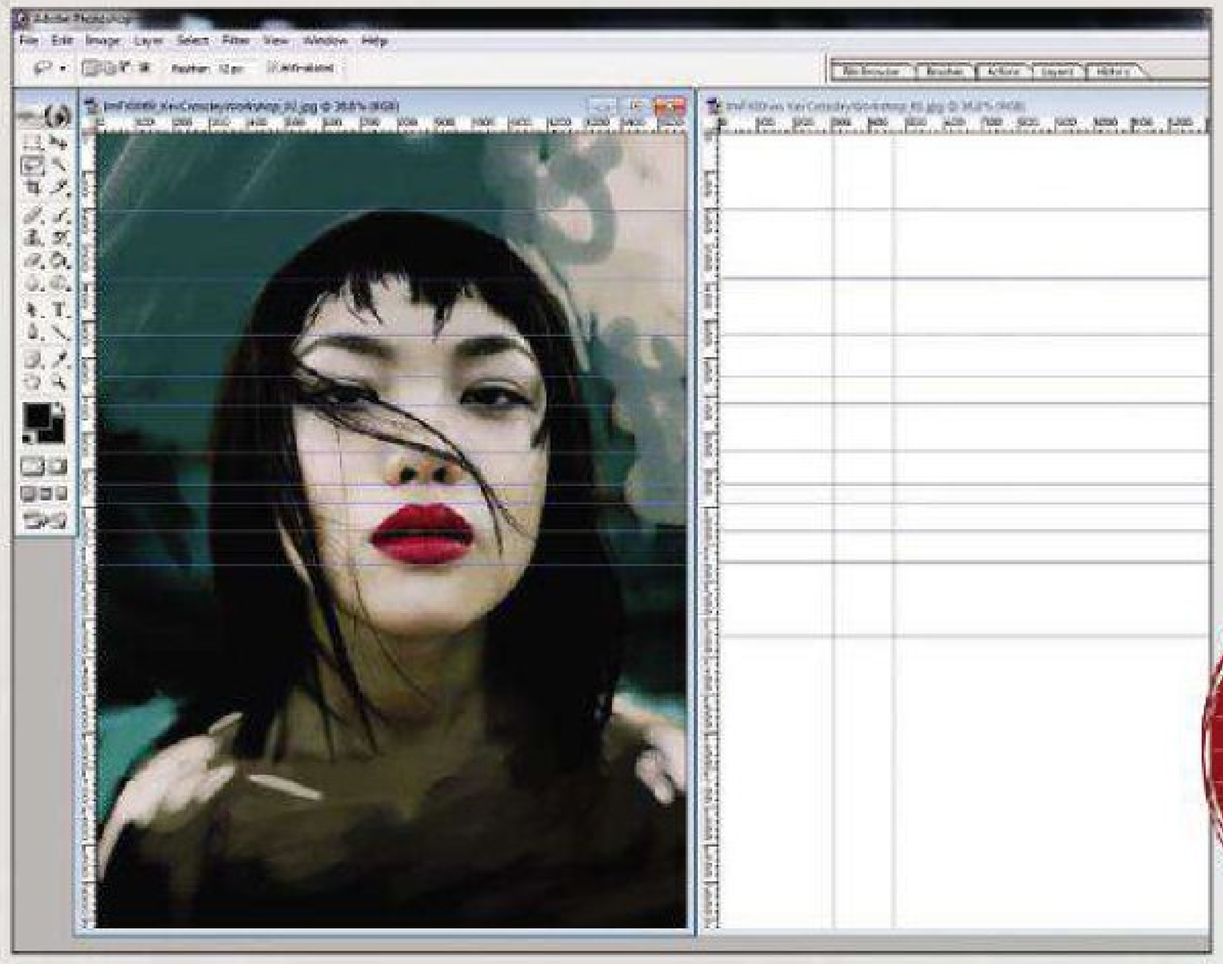
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3 Creating a grid using Guides instead of Photoshop's default Grid tool

Although Photoshop offers a superb grid feature I only need a few select lines to work from so I use Guides instead. Making sure that the Rulers are visible, I click and drag guides down onto the image. This process is repeated using both the horizontal and vertical rulers until I've created a bespoke grid over the photograph that describes specific points all over the image. On a blank canvas I re-create this process to create an identical grid.



4 Blocking in colour

Using the Paint bucket I fill the canvas with a flat colour. A mid-tone hue is best here because it generates a good, flat background against which light and dark shades sit well. Selecting a basic Round brush with a size of around 150 and an opacity level of between 80 and 90 per cent, I quickly block in the main areas of colour for the face and hair. I start by laying down the lightest and darkest tones of skin, hair, main shadows and background.





5 Break down into basic elements

Gradually, I break up the areas that correspond to the differing complexities of shade and hue within the photograph. It's an organic, imprecise process, even using my custom grid and Eyedropper. I want to boil the image down to its basic contrast elements; the tonal building blocks on which the success of the finished painting depends. When the various smudges and splodges look like they incorporate all the major features, it's time to examine the details.

PRO SECRETS

Grid tips

When using guides, make sure you turn Snap to guides off. If you don't, your brush strokes will jump towards the nearest guidelines, creating strange effects that you probably won't want! Furthermore, whether you use the Photoshop grid or guides, the attributes of these functions can be altered by opening the Preferences dialog: Edit>Preferences> Guides, Grids & Slices. Here you can change the colours, line styles and other attributes to suit your taste.

Shortcuts

Eye-dropper tool

Alt (PC & Mac)

Hold down Alt then click in any image you have open to select a colour to work with.

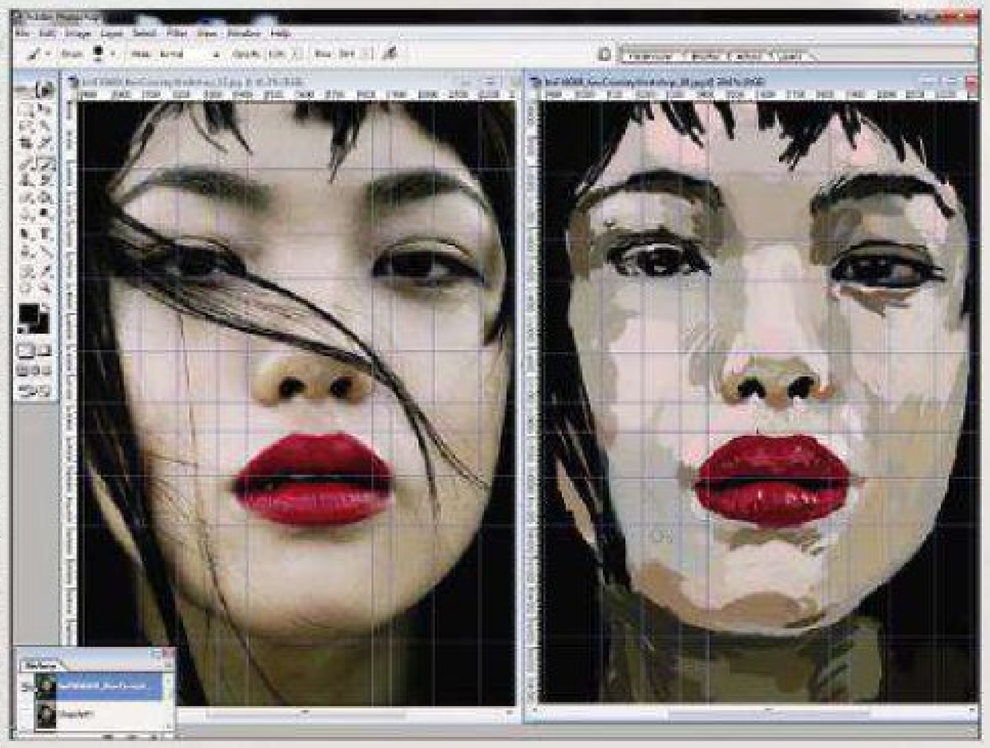
6 Refining the composition

Next I sketch out the shapes of the eyes and add definition to the nose, lips and face shape. I use the Eyedropper less on the photograph, instead selecting subtle shades between the colour tones of my painting to blur the boundaries between light and shade. After around ten minutes the blocky smudge now looks a little more like the subject, and in fact could be abandoned at this stage: As a sketch, it already succeeds, but I want to develop it a little further.



7 Getting closer

So far so good, but I need to make the face look less like a semi-conscious fish that's just walked into a plate-glass window and more like a human being! To do this I need to concentrate on the eyes and mouth, so I zoom into the face area. Now I have greater control over where my brush is going, and I can use the source image to pick ever more specific colours from.





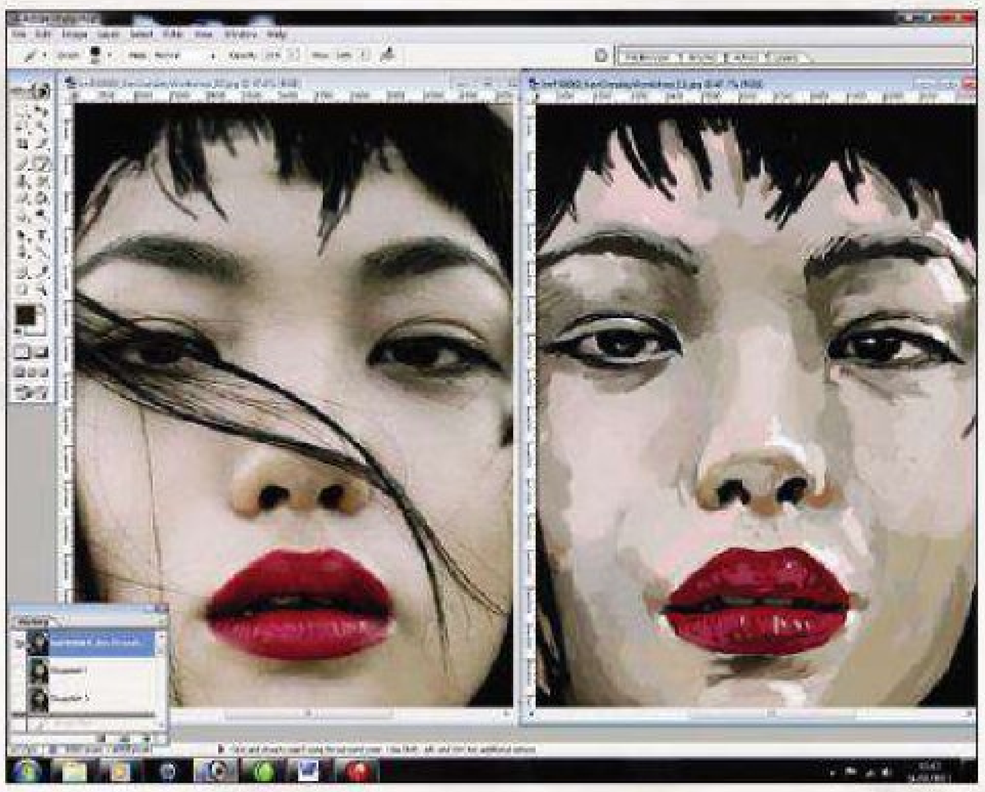
8 Further refinement

I begin to adjust the size and opacity of the brush as I work, allowing the colours to blend a little more as I refine the tonal planes of the face. I spend a fair amount of time on the eyes, but the left eye is a little tricky because of the hair lying across the face in the photograph. I use the right eye as reference, before re-shaping the lips and nostrils.

Sketchbook.com

9 Working the detail

I zoom in closer still on the face, and turn off the guide-grid. It's done its job and is now more a hindrance than a help. I can now see which areas need more attention in closer detail, and as I work I adjust the brush size and opacity at greater intervals than previously used. Gradually the colours are mixed into one another to create smoother transitions between the contrasting tones.



10 Additional detail work

This technique of blending the colours is expanded throughout the entire image, smoothing the tones of the background, hair and shoulders. By this point I have spent about an hour on the painting, but I feel it needs a little more work before I can sign it off, so I spend a further 10 minutes concentrating on the details of the face and hair as well as the image as a whole.



11 Finishing up

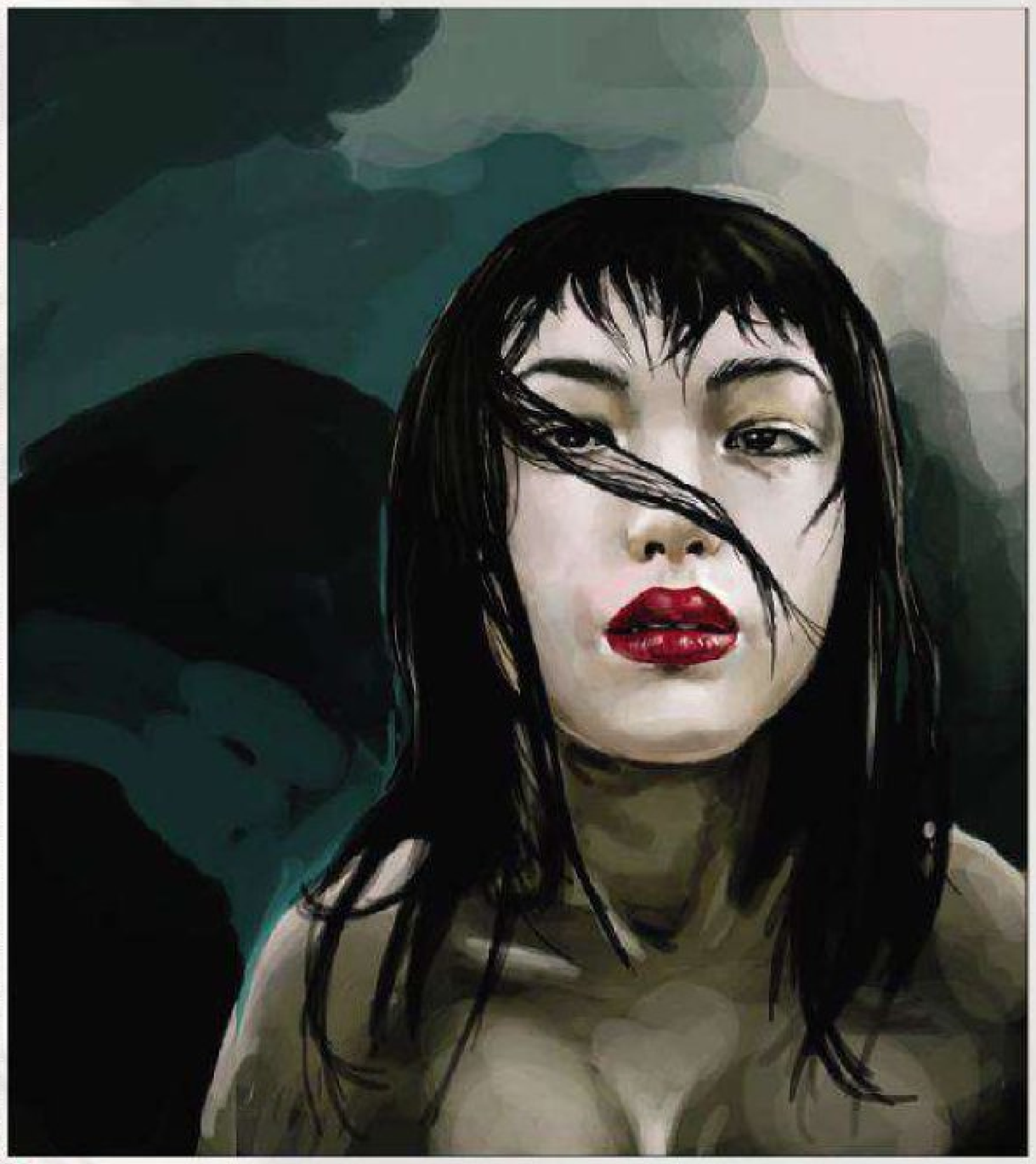
Although I've spent slightly over my allotted hour working on this sketch, it's still a pleasingly quick resolution to the image, and at no point did I get bogged down in energy-sapping problem areas. The process of working so loosely and quickly negates the urge or requirement to spend too long in any one area. This retains an energy and fluidity that can be sometimes lost in more in-depth painting.



PRO SECRETS

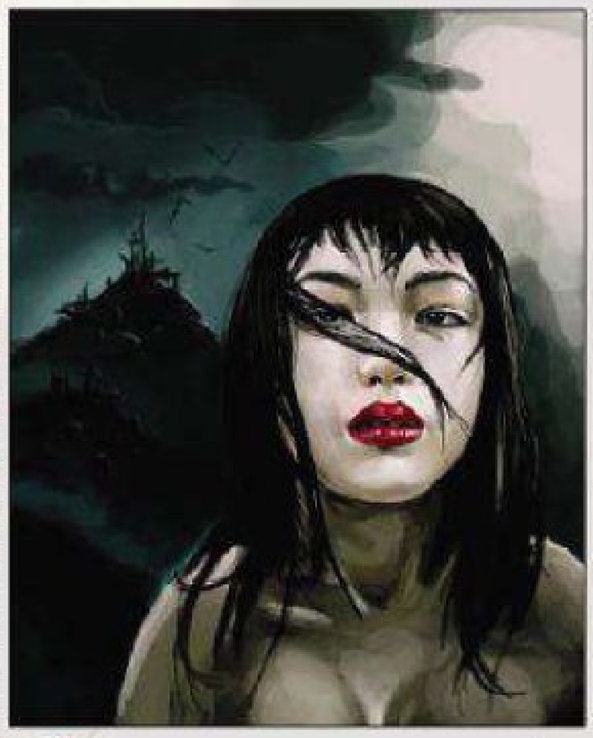
Don't panic!

There's always a moment about halfway through a sketch when I begin to panic. It looks terrible and it seems I'll never find the face within the mess! This soon passes and out of chaos comes order! If you're just starting out as a painter and recognise this fear response, don't worry! It's a normal response experienced by many painters. How you work through such moments defines the sort of artist you are, and of course aids development. As they quite rightly say, no pain, no gain...



12 Expanding the concept

I thought it might be fun to show how it's possible to take a sketch like this and develop it further. I chose the source photograph because it made me think immediately of a vampire, and the idea of pushing it in such a direction once I'd finished the initial painting seemed like it might be fun. I need a little more space, so I increase the size of the canvas and block in more background.



13 Exploiting the clichés

We're now in cliché territory; we have a sultry (soon-to-be) vampire, in an environment that would appear to be under a shroud of dark night. I think about what else I can add to dress the scene. Making it up as I go along, I work the background into hills and mounds climbing above one another into an eerie, Stygian-lit sky, roughly scribbling in tombstones and a few airborne bats for good measure.



14 Give it some bite

On a new layer I use the Marquee tool to create a circular selection that I fill with white. I then change the Layer mode to Overlay, reduce the layer Opacity and erase parts of the circle until it resembles a cloud-obscured moon. After flattening the image I add stars, more bats and highlights to the image, before subtly extending the incisors of the vampire. A touch of dripping blood and we're done!



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Next month in... ImagineFX

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

The digital art revolution returns

Andrew Jones puts Painter 12 through its paces in a new workshop, exclusively for ImagineFX!

PLUS! Inside ***Painter 12***: the new tools and features that'll make your art pop!

James Gurney workshop
The Dinotopia art legend explores new ways to work with photo references.

Keeping it nice and simple
Discover how loose painting gives lasting results in a workshop by Loïc Zimmerman.

Marta Dahlig returns!
The celebrated artist paints a grand dame of fantasy using new brush techniques.

A Black view of the future
We get an insider's view of the latest concept art goings-on at Massive Black.

ISSUE 70 ON SALE *4 MAY 2011*

Photoshop

UNIFY A RANGE OF FANTASY GENRES

Maciej Kuciara shows how to design an iconic heroine, encompassing several different elements and unifying the concept with colour

Artist PROFILE

Maciej Kuciara
COUNTRY: Poland



Maciej is an art director and concept artist who's spent six years working in the video game and entertainment design industries, specialising in creating concept art and matte paintings for Crytek and Naughty Dog.
www.maciejkuciara.com

DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD in the Maciej Kuciara folder in Workshops.

ON THE DVD
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: HARD SOFT EDGED

This simple brush works like a charm for sketching purposes. Its opposing sharp and soft edges also help to enhance surface specular highlights.

CHALKY TEXTURED

This simple chalky brush is ideal for bringing an oil paint texture into the artwork. It blends nicely with paint that's already on the canvas, so I use it for blocking out colours.

For this workshop I'll be guiding you through a few simple steps on how to create an interesting and unique character design – one that's not tied down to any specific genre. I'll try to break the boundaries by dropping interesting elements into the mix and creating a character that unites contrasting worlds into one consistent and appealing painting. I'll take a look at a couple of different aspects, such as presentation and brainstorming ideas into concept sketches. Finally, I'll take my preferred sketch through to a finished image.

The subject for this workshop is a heroine – a mistress of all the genres. I have a strong idea in mind for who she is and how she'll look. She's a hot, badass blonde, a vintage pilot wielding an SMG, with a katana strapped to her back, riding a tamed dragon and destroying anything that stands in her way.

But there are still issues to overcome. I'll show you how a strong control of colour can unify the disparate genre ideas into one image. Are you strapped in? Hold on tight!







1 Brainstorm some ideas

You need to consider how you're going to present your character before thinking about specifics such as value, colour and detail. Depending on the subject, the character design can be shown either as a standard portrait shot, or as an action/cinematic shot that puts our hero/heroine in a specific situation. Each option has its own strengths and weaknesses.

2 Choose the right idea for the subject

Taking a brief moment to sketch a few dirty strokes on paper, or in Photoshop, will help you to make your decision. For this workshop I worked up three different sketches. Two were passive and active cinematic shots, and one was a simple portrait sketch. I tried to get thinking about different subjects that go together well: fantasy, sci-fi, post-apocalyptic fallout, vintage and the modern world. I found that my third portrait sketch held my attention the most. It gave me the opportunity to show interesting costume details, revealing part of her environment and introducing some welcome storytelling elements.

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3 References

Before I get my hands dirty and start digging more into my sketch I always try to spend an hour researching the subject. I find it helpful to have a decent collection of photos and photo-textures on hand when painting. Because I like my art to have a realistic look, I'm constantly studying photography and nature to understand the way lighting and colour works.



4 Work on values

Once I'm happy with the story my sketch is telling, I start to work up some detail. This helps convince me the idea I'm planning to work on for the next couple of hours is heading in the right direction. I continue building up values, creating mood, and a lighting scheme that will strengthen the ideas. I try to put enough detail in black and white to know where I'll use my colours. Using a few custom brushes to build up interesting shapes and patterns helps me include the key ideas that'll evolve in the colouring and detailing processes.



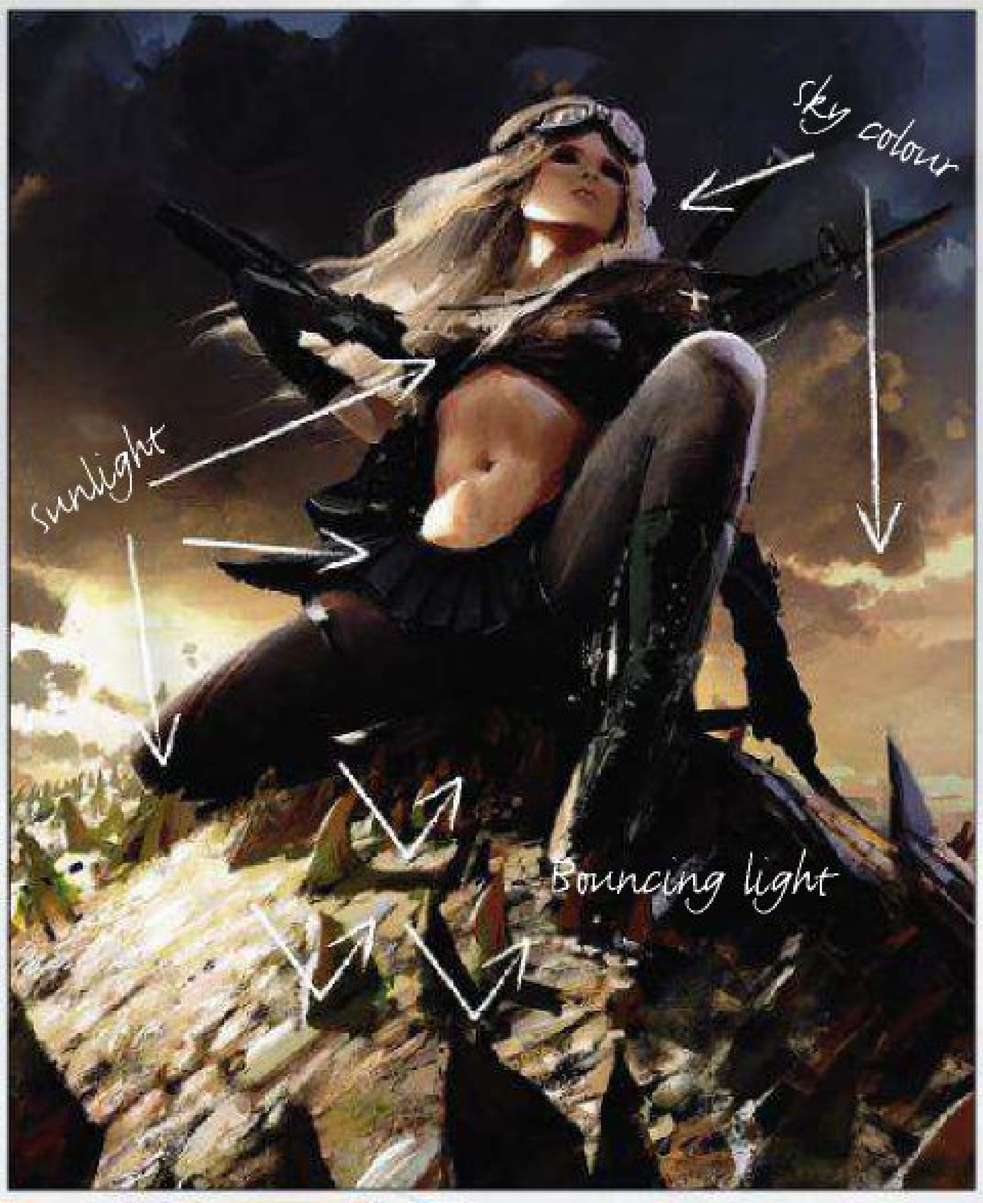
5 Time for some colour

When I'm happy with the values and the detail in the sketch, I start colouring the image. For my vintage pilot heroine I try to create a lighting scheme that puts the viewer in mind of a World War I aerial battle. I add a dramatic sunset that lights my character with sharp rim highlights. Blue ambient skylight beaming through the clouds gives the scene a range of contrasting dominant colours: blue/teal and yellow/orange.

6 Custom brushes

Once the major colour strokes are in place, I continue to add colour on top of the sketch with my custom brushes. I use these brushes to slowly build and integrate the colours into the lighting scheme I have in mind. At the same, time I start to fill the artwork with detail that'll enhance the character.





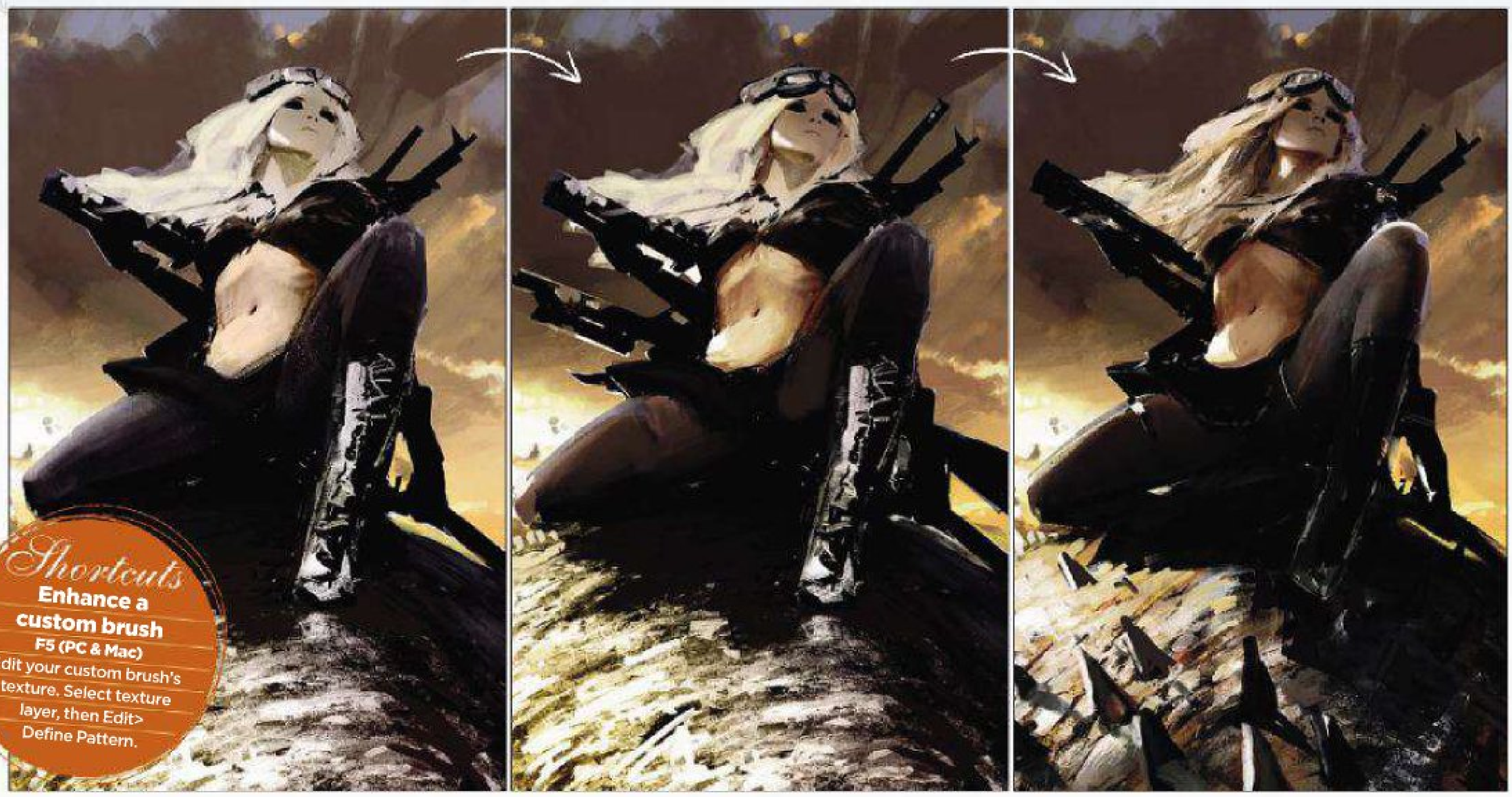
PRO SECRETS

Spot mistakes

Bind Flip Canvas into easily accessible keys. Seeing your canvas in the mirrored view will reveal composition, value and detail balance mistakes.

7 Customise colour brushes

As I build in the colour, I pay special attention to what my light sources are and how the light will play on the character. In this case I'm using strong, sharp and warm sunlight, combined with a soft, cold sky colour, to create ambient light. I continue on this path for a while, trying to unify the amount of work I've put into the image so the various elements all hold nicely together.



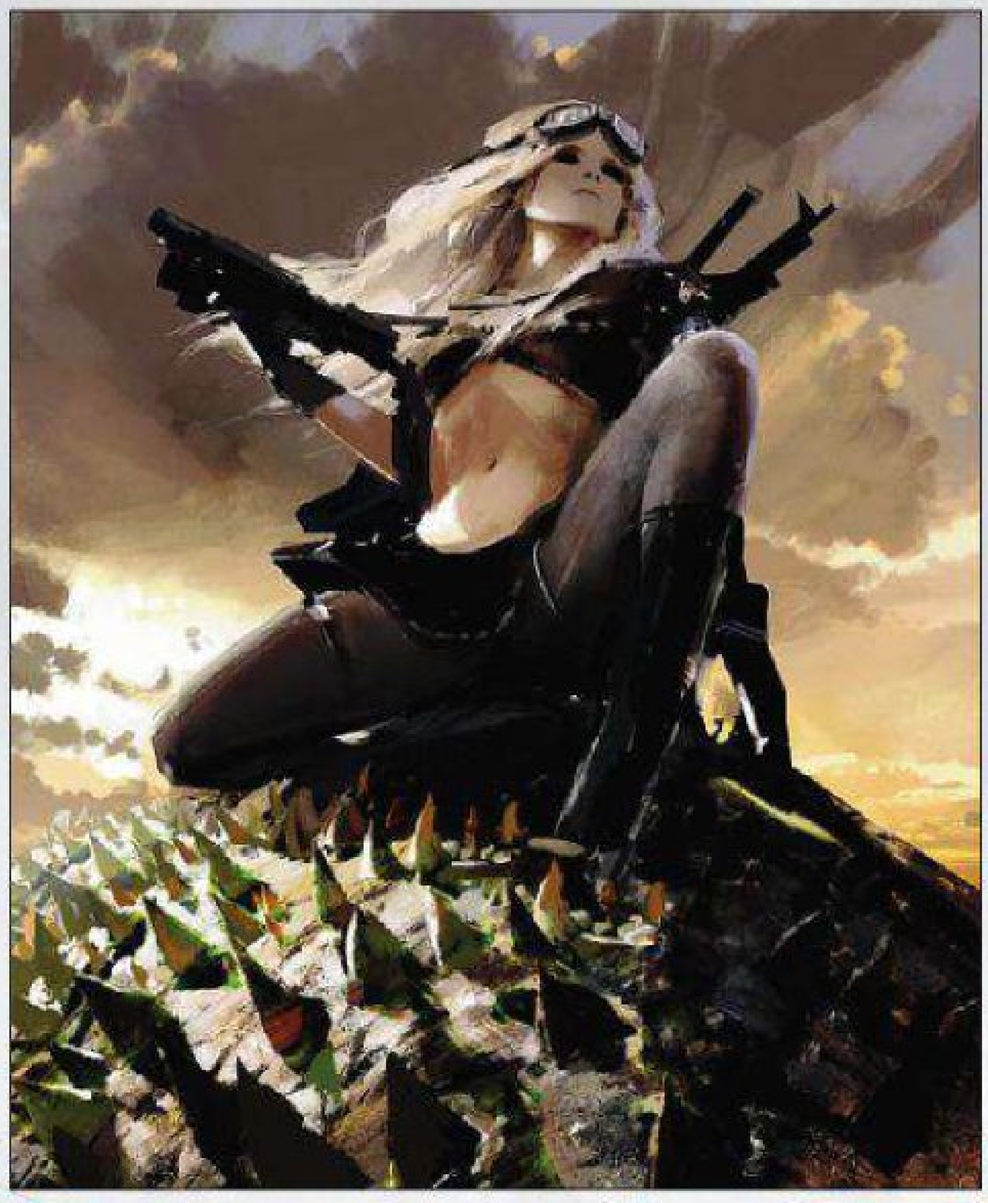
Shortcuts

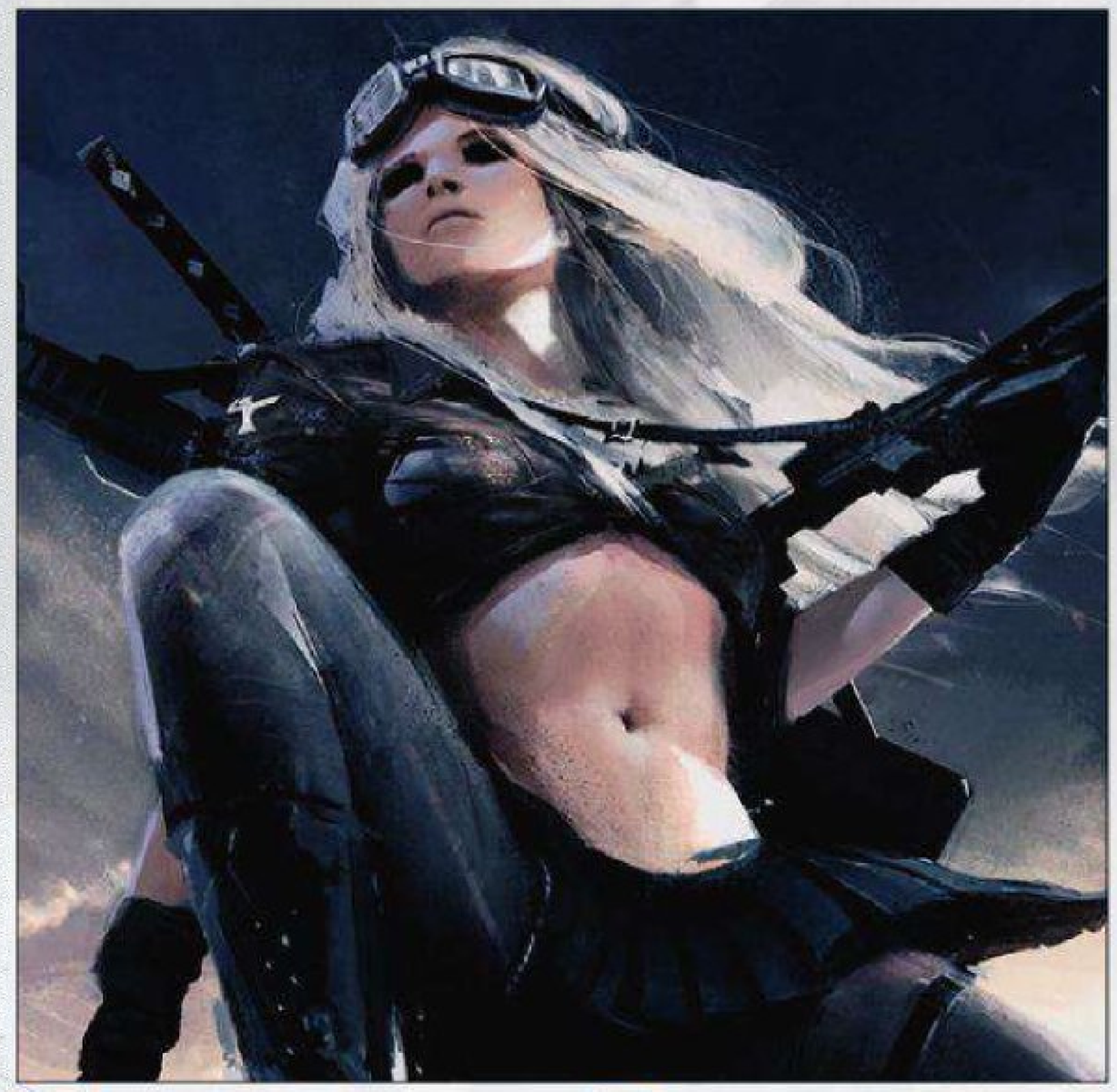
Enhance a custom brush

F5 (PC & Mac)

Edit your custom brush's texture. Select texture layer, then Edit> Define Pattern.

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8 Add details

When I'm satisfied with the amount of detail in the colour values and shapes, I begin to add details into the focal areas. I always like to keep sharp edges and clearly defined textures in areas that are central to the image. In my sketch, the focus lies on the character, while the dragon's skin and the sky are kept loose. With this technique, even with the intense lighting of the background, I can keep the viewer focused on what's important in the picture: the character.

9 Colour correction

The image finally has enough detail to consider it close to being finished. At this point I usually take a few steps back and try to gain a fresh look, to see if the result is satisfying or if it still needs more love. I decide I'm not yet happy with the colours – they don't fully embrace the idea in my head. What I often try to do first is see if there's any way to enhance the values and contrast using the Channels.



PRO SECRETS

Edit your colours

You can easily tweak or push specific colours that you're not happy with by creating a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, and choosing the colours you want to work with from the drop-down menu within the settings. You can also tweak the hard and soft range for that colour on which your changes will operate.

10 Touch ups

I adjust the colour through Color Balance, Levels, Hue/Saturation, Selective Colors and Vibrance until something close to what I had in my mind takes hold. I don't limit adjustment layers, to general settings – instead I play with Photoshop's advanced options, such as controlling levels per channel (blue, red, green) or hues per colour (green, yellow, red and so on). I spend time making sure I end up with colours I'm happy with.

11 Final touches

After I'm happy with overall colour grading results, I try to push in a few more touch-ups in areas that could use more detail. I also try to fix some of the dirty brush strokes I applied in the early sketch stages. Finally, I try to make sure that even the crashed dark areas of the image hold some definition. I Color Select from the darkest values of the image and use a custom Noise Layer, which I paint with my brush set in a separate file.



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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX Reviews

Artist's Choice Award
Software and hardware with a five-star rating receives the IFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team…

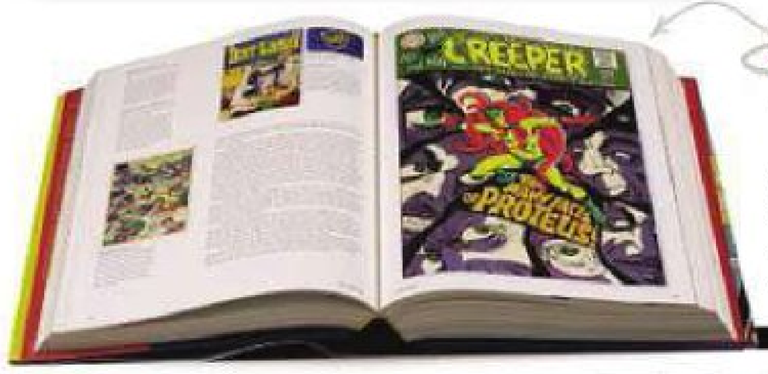


11 PRODUCTS ON TEST



SOFTWARE

106 Poser Debut
This budget version of the popular modelling program is a great way for 2D digital artists to leap into the third dimension.



BOOKS

108 New reads
75 Years of DC Comics: The Art of Modern Mythmaking; Sucker Punch: The Art of the Film; The Ballad of Rango: The Art and Making of an Outlaw Film.

TRAINING

109 Drawing the Female Portrait
Spend six instructive hours in the company of virtuoso Ron Lemen.



FILMS

110 New movies
TRON: Legacy; Skyline; Monsters.

VIDEO GAMES

111 New games
Crysis 2; LEGO Star Wars II: The Clone Wars; Dragon Age II.



RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Good Ordinary Poor Atrocious



Richard Kitner Jr used a more advanced version of Poser to create this render, but many of the tools he used are available in Poser Debut.

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For just $50, Poser Debut enables you to explore 3D graphics through virtual mannequins that you can position, animate and render.



Poser Debut

MAC & PC

GATEWAY TO 3D This scaled-down version of a long-standing 3D favourite still packs a hefty punch

Price $50 **Company** Smith Micro **Web** poser.smithmicro.com **Contact** Via web

Priced to encourage you to dip your toes into creating 3D art for the first time, Poser Debut is like a virtual photographer's studio in which you dress the scene, set up the models and lights, then take the picture. As well as enabling you to create finished images and animations, it's also a useful reference tool; you can check how an arm would look from an unusual camera angle or see how a face looks under a particular lighting scheme.

Unlike more sophisticated 3D software, you can't create your own figures and props – instead, you mix and match from the 2GB of content provided, or buy in content from Content Paradise, the online store run by Poser Debut's publisher. To help you get started, the program includes over 50 step-by-step guides with video. These are clear and follow a logical sequence from first concepts to rendering your completed scene.

The user interface is less friendly, mostly because of the variety of styles used for different controls. Selecting figures and other content from the Library area is a fiddly process, although the separate Search tab is effective. The dials that enable you to adjust every detail of your figure's pose and proportions are more accessible. And after paying $50 for a product, we could do without the ticker-tape advertising panel.

> **A clever globe-shaped control gives a good sense of what lights are where**

Lighting and rendering your scene once it's set up is simple. A clever globe-shaped control gives you a good sense of what lights are where in the scene, and rendering is as easy as selecting the preset you want to use. The animation uses a frame-by-frame system that's straightforward to pick up, easy to apply and applicable to other 3D software, should you delve deeper into the topic.

Of course, you can achieve far more with Poser 8 – from which Debut is derived – including advanced material editing, flowing cloth and hair, and faster, more customisable rendering. Poser Debut can't be a substitute for a sibling program that costs five times as much, and you may strain against its limits before long. Concerns over the friendliness of the interface aside, however, it's a good way to explore 3D if you've never looked beyond Photoshop or Painter.

DETAILS

Features
- Pose 3D characters, props and scenery
- Customise 3D models with dial controls
- Online search for further content
- Lights and cameras
- Built-in render engine
- Animate your scenes
- Walk Designer tool
- Export images, video or Flash

System Requirements
PC: Windows XP/ Vista/7; 700MHz Pentium or equivalent; 512MB RAM; Flash Player 9.
Mac: OS X 10.5/ 10.6; 700MHz PowerPC G4 processor; 512MB RAM; Flash Player 9

Rating

ARTIST INTERVIEW

RICHARD KITNER JR

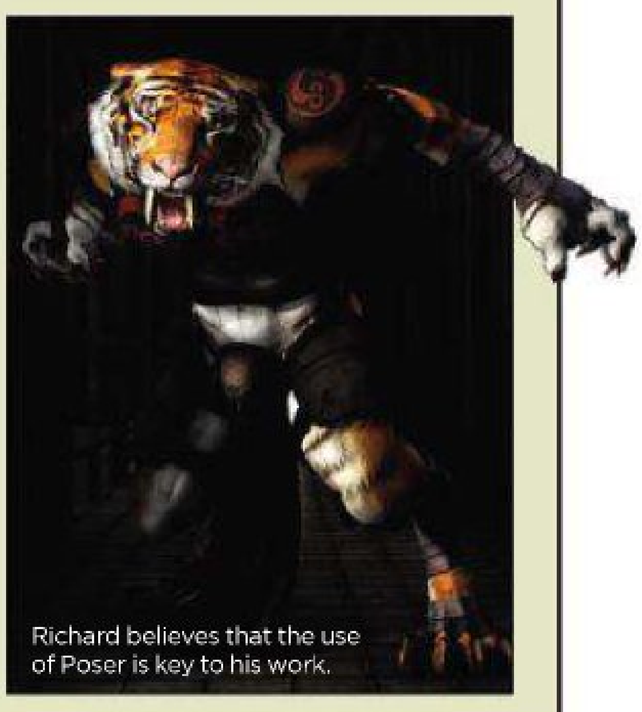
Poser is the creative fulcrum this fantasy artist relies on

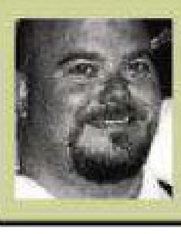
What was it in particular about Poser that appealed to you when you first tried it out?
The ability to take the content available to me and use it how I saw fit. I could light it, pose it and create with almost no restrictions.

Does the program play a large role when you're creating artwork now?
Poser is my go-to application. Without it, I don't think I'd be creating any artwork at all! Just about every image I make starts and ends with Poser.

What benefits can it bring to fantasy artists discovering the software for the first time?
The unprecedented ability to light and pose figures and to find the perfect point of view with the cameras. You know that the shadows fall where they should and your perspective is always going to be spot-on. It's great if you want to digitally paint over the base.

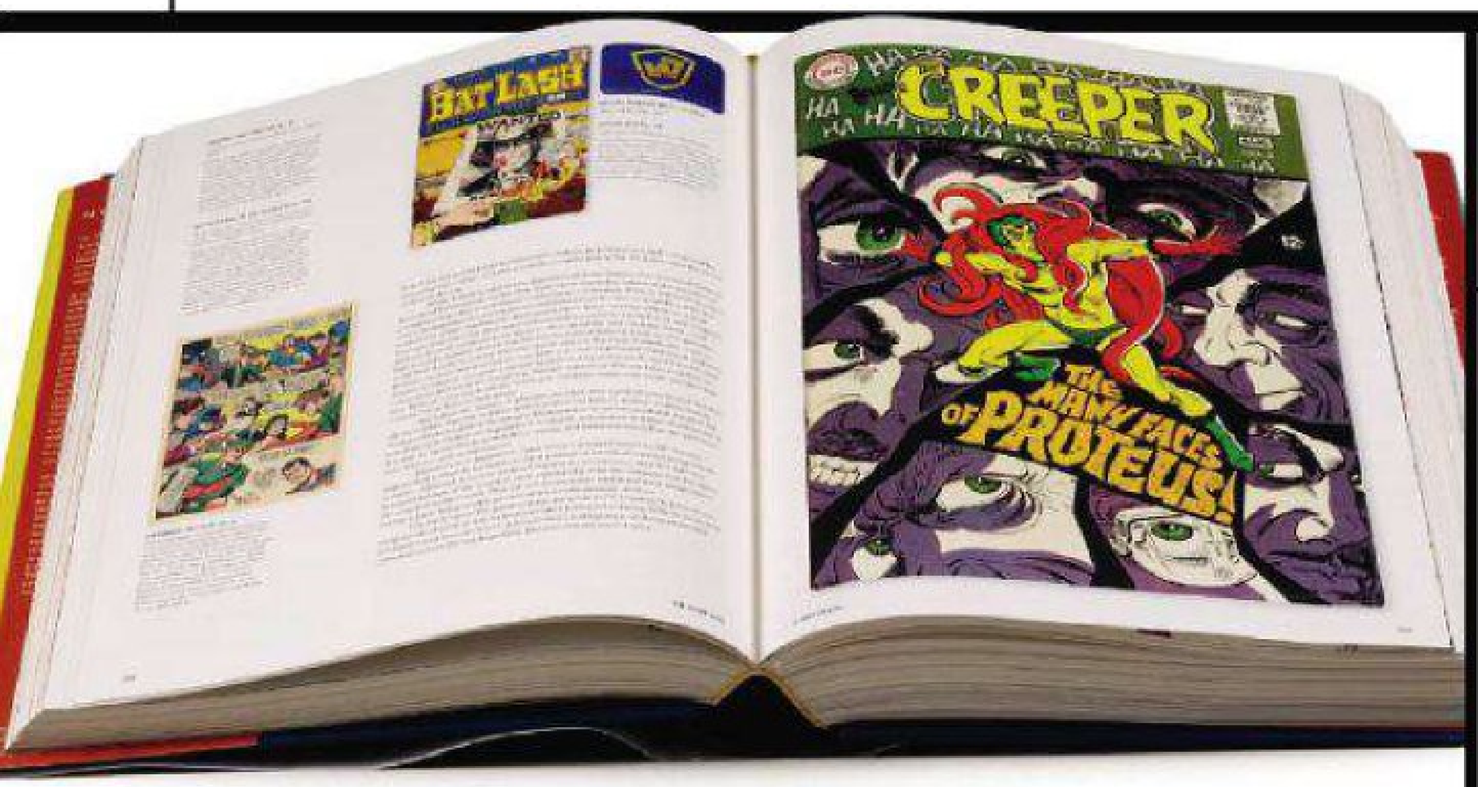
What advice would you offer newcomers to Poser to help them create better artwork?
Emulate your favourite artists and create images that interest you. Read lots of tutorials and ask many questions of established artists. The best way to learn is to just dive in and start playing.


Richard believes that the use of Poser is key to his work.



Richard Kitner Jr has created artwork for the games Battleground: Fantasy Warfare and Duel of Ages II.

home.comcast.net/~forevernyt



75 Years of DC Comics: The Art of Modern Mythmaking

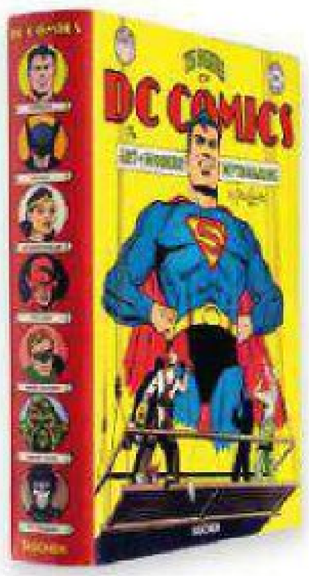
SUPERSIZED If you only purchase one massive, weighty book on DC's illustrious history this year, make it this one

Author Paul Levitz **Publisher** Taschen **Price** £135
Web www.taschen.com **ISBN** 9783836519816 **Available** Now

There are many things to report about this 75th anniversary book of DC Comics, but it would take a rather robust reader to miss the main appeal: its massive bulk. Weighing around seven kilograms and coming in its own plastic-handled case, the thing is humongous. And with 720 pages measuring 47x33cm, this translates into a lot of fun when leafing through it.

Its size isn't all novelty though – everything about this book is huge. The contents take us on a journey through DC Comics' history, with many full-page covers and other contemporary imagery, from photography to models and screen stills. This displays the classic comic art in grand proportions, but also a vividly colourful historical context of these most treasured comic characters and stories.

There are five pull-out, four-page timelines that you can extend to reveal smartly designed and hugely informative histories of the main ages of comics (the silver and gold sheens of the outer pages is just one example of Taschen's impressive production flourishes). Seven chapters comprise the Stone (up to 1938), Gold, Silver, Bronze, Dark and Modern ages, with an afterword on Digital.



Threaded throughout the tome are biographies of key artists, writers, and in the case of Karen Berger, originator of DC imprint Vertigo, key editor. The balance of text, photography and contemporary art always seems right, and it's easy to manoeuvre around the pages with captions and headings clearly pointing the way.

There's a section that displays book case designer Chip Kidd's personal collection of non-superhero artists' drawings of superheroes. Charles Burns, Matt Groening and Chris Ware's offer mini comics of Batman and provide the only exclusive content of the book, the rest being available elsewhere.

But you'll not find such a colourful history so entertainingly presented anywhere else, and although the cost is hefty, the unique experience of immersing yourself in DC's world through this faultlessly researched and designed book is worth the price of admission.

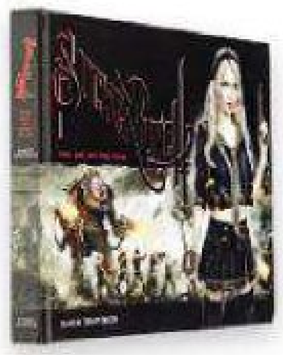
RATING

Further reading...

One 'Art of..' book fails to land a killer blow, while the other goes the distance

Sucker Punch: The Art of the Film

Edited Zack Snyder
Publisher Titan Books **Price** £30
Web www.titanbooks.com
ISBN 9781848568532 **Available** Now
RATING



Film art books usually have as much, if not more, photo-based content as 2D and 3D artwork, and this book is no different. Thankfully, this only serves to re-establish how this film's concept art informs and inspires the film's final look.

Whether you love or hate Zack Snyder's film interpretations of acclaimed graphic novels 300 and Watchmen, he's worked with great artists on his films, and this title – based on original material – continues that trend. It's a real disappointment, then, that the artists that have played such an integral part of the film's aesthetic are left unnamed here – a disappointing oversight for a book with the word 'art' in the title.

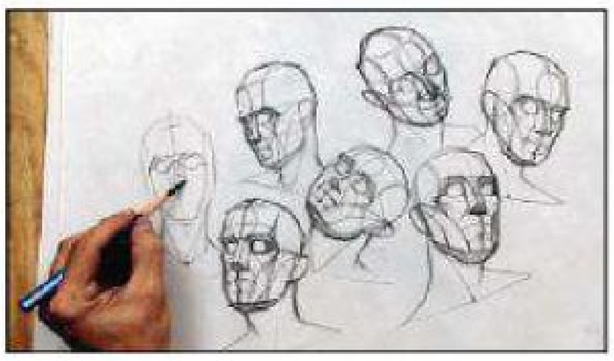
The Ballad of Rango: The Art and Making of an Outlaw Film

Edited David S Cohen
Publisher Titan Books **Price** £28
Web www.titanbooks.com
ISBN 9780857684752 **Available** Now
RATING



If you've seen Rango at your local multiplex then you'll know the film's packed with odd-looking varmints. The Ballad of Rango provides a good insight into how every creature made the jump from sketch to final render. The text from the key people involved only goes so far though – good job, then, that the artwork is reproduced on a large scale. This enables you to examine every brush stroke and texture without squinting like one of the sun-beaten denizens of the Spaghetti Western-esque town Dirt, where much of the film is set. Details of key action sequences complete a book that should interest anyone who's interested in seeing cohesive character concept art.

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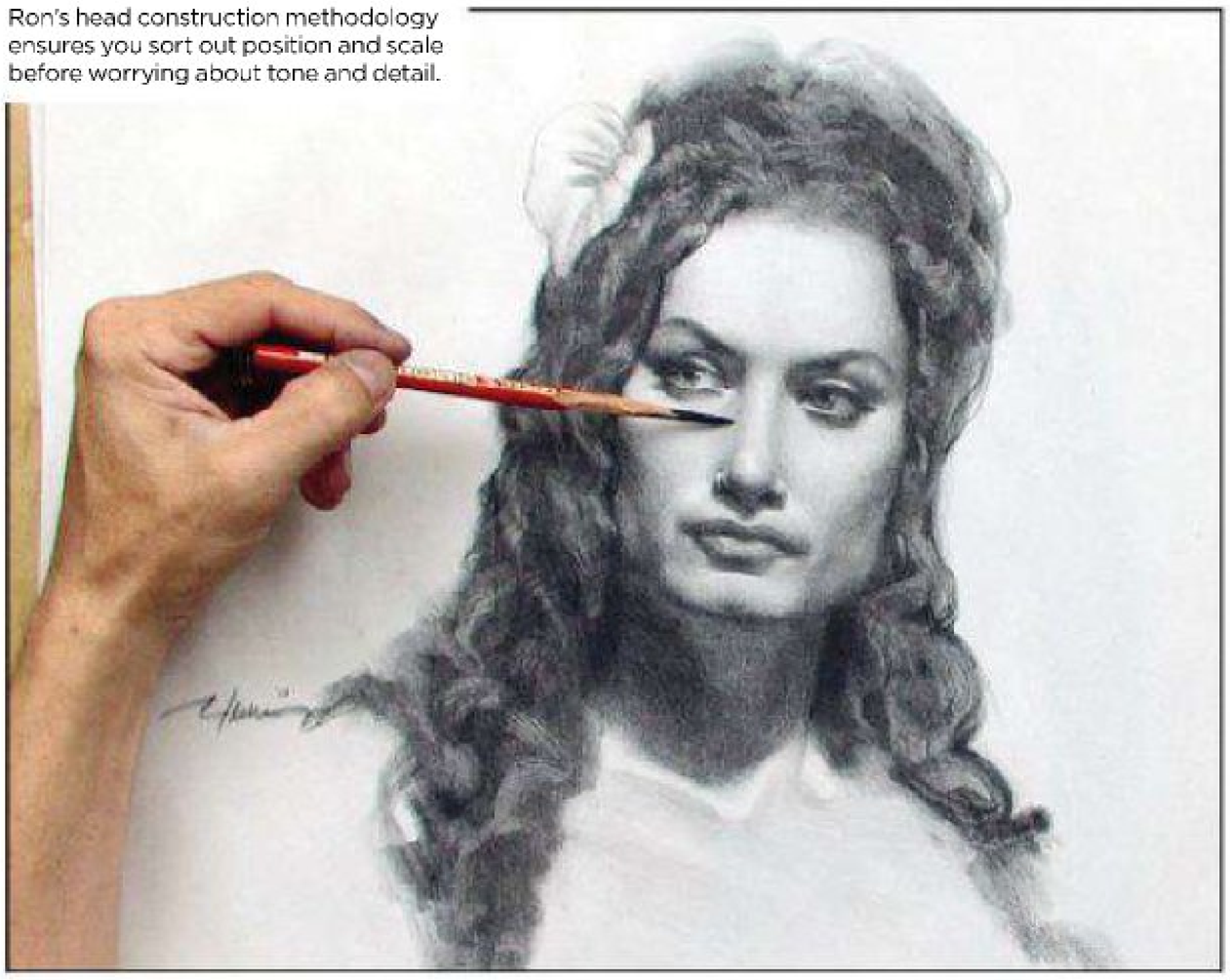






The training video shows how Ron uses values of dark and light to establish a value scale that enables accurate rendering of skin tones.

Ron's head construction methodology ensures you sort out position and scale before worrying about tone and detail.







SAMPLE ON YOUR DVD!

Drawing the Female Portrait

DO RON RON Six hours in the company of Ron Lemen will transform the way you approach not just portraits, but everything else you draw

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** $49 **Format** DVD/Download **Web** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

On a physical level, very little happens in this, the second in a projected series by Ron Lemen on portraiture. You'll see an unwavering overhead shot of the artist drawing a succession of life studies: one short and one long, for each of three standard views of the head. With the exception of a single charcoal exercise, everything else on the video is rendered in pencil, without the distraction of colour.

On a conceptual level, however, this drawing masterclass is one of the deepest experiences in the Gnomon Workshop training catalogue. As Ron draws, he narrates everything he's thinking about to achieve portrait studies that feel solid and alive.

The video kicks off with an accessible sequence in which Ron explains some of the core principles he constantly applies in his work. You might be familiar with the idea of using values of dark and light to check your painting's composition and legibility. Ron focuses here on another use for them: establishing a value scale that enables you to accurately render the tones you see. He also shows three common ways to create varied tones with a line-drawing tool such as a pencil, and encourages you to warm up for a drawing session with quick head construction exercises.

The exercises become more relevant as Ron starts creating the drawings. You'll see how his head construction principles evolve into drawing features as abstract forms, ensuring you sort out position and scale before worrying about tone and detail.

Despite the austere simplicity of the presentation, this is a video that repays close attention and repeated viewing. Despite a running length of nearly six hours, there are few wasted words: you're in the hands of an artist who has deep knowledge of his craft and the ability to communicate it with precision.

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Mark-making
- The value scale
- Head construction
- Achieving solidity

Length
355 minutes

Rating

ARTIST PROFILE

RON LEMEN

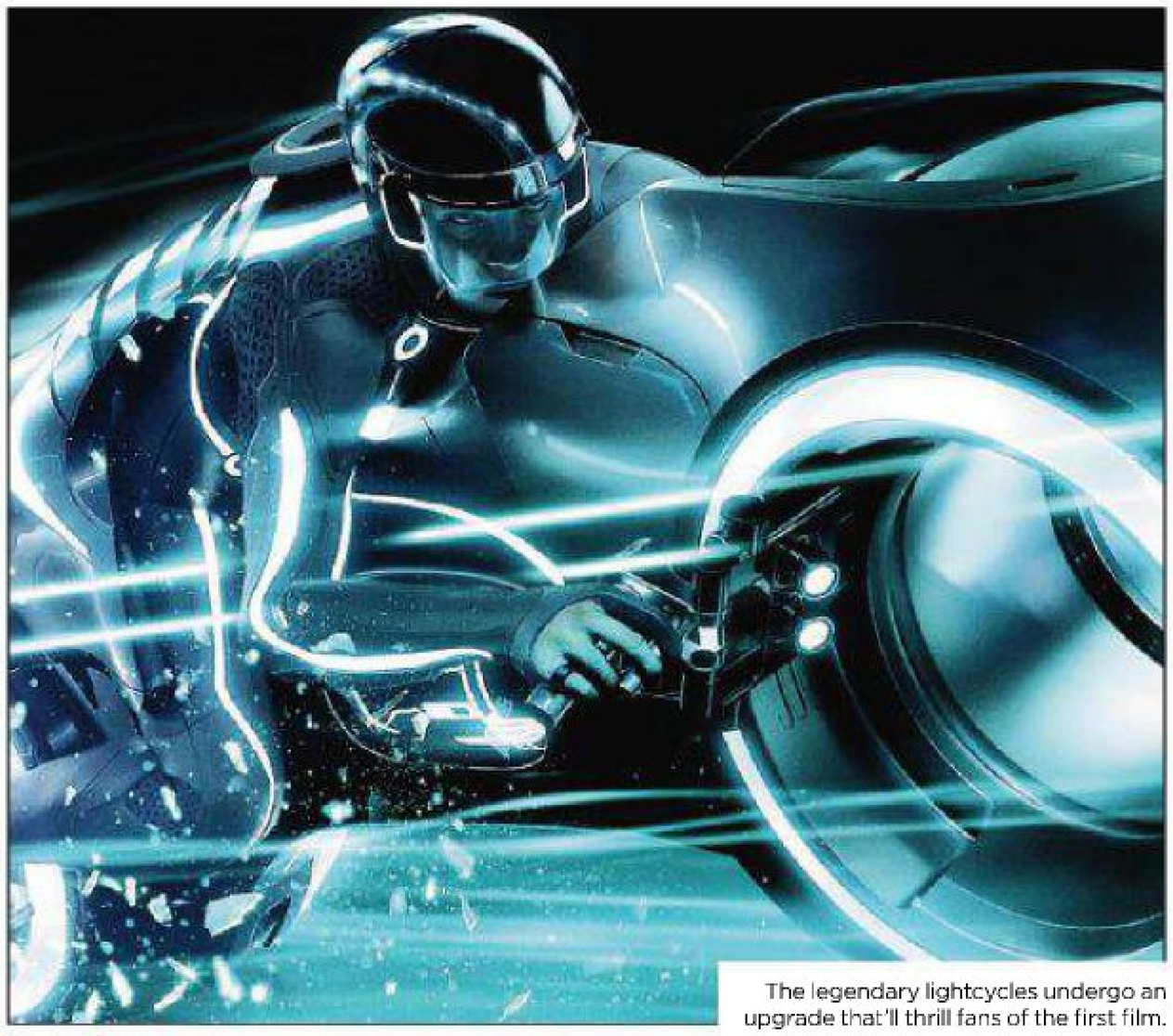
Classically trained, and a former pupil of the Spanish portrait virtuoso Sebastian Capella, Ron has been a concept designer and art director in the video games industry for over a decade. His clients include Blizzard, Time Warner, Wizards of the Coast, Marvel Comics and Disney. Ron has been an art instructor for nearly 20 years and, with his wife Vanessa, he runs an art school in California, where they instruct classical foundation, fine art painting, illustration and conceptual design.



ronlemen.blogspot.com

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The legendary lightcycles undergo an upgrade that'll thrill fans of the first film.

TRON: Legacy

SECOND COMING Exquisite visuals take centre stage in the family friendly sequel to the iconic film from the 80s

Distributor Disney **Certificate** PG **Price** £18 (£24 Blu-ray) **Available** 18 April

Featuring special effects that the makers of the original 1982 film could only dream of, TRON: Legacy is one of the sleekest, visually immersive films of recent years – especially in 3D.

Twenty years after the mysterious disappearance of computer genius Kevin Flynn (Jeff Bridges), his son, still resistant to taking over his father's computer company, sporadically sabotages the company's quest for world dominance instead. When Sam tracks down the source of a strange signal from his missing father, he soon finds himself transported into The Grid, his father's digital alternative reality and prison for the last two decades. United, they must confront their ruthless jailer, the digital tyrant Clu.



Syd Mead's original vehicle concepts get a polished reworking from Daniel Simon, with Neville Page's fingerprints on the helmet designs and 'Iron Man 2' Phil Saunders taking care of the new costumes. All else is neon lights set against charcoal blacks, and like a new bit of kit you instantly want to get involved.

Both DVD and Blu-ray discs offer cool extras, with the latter featuring a preview of the animated series TRON: Uprising. They both have mini films, Visualizing Tron and Installing the Cast, which should sufficiently blow minds.

True, it's a little hard to muster any real empathy for the 2D characters, but as the PG rating suggests, this is primarily for kids who'll enjoy inhabiting a beautifully crafted parallel digital world, and secondly for the adults keen to replicate their experience of watching TRON the first time round.



Not all the environments in TRON: Legacy are black.

RATING

Also look at…

VFX directors fumble an alien invasion, while a low-key alien drama scores high



Skyline

Distributor Momentum Pictures
Certificate 15
Price £20 (£25 Blu-ray)
Available Now
RATING



Skyline is a film made by visual effects professionals and it shows, on all levels. Directed by The Brothers Strause, and written by two of their visual effects pals (on their script debut), it may have started as a brainstorming session of B-movie fun, but the result is a ponderous A-movie fail.

A group of friends in LA are awakened one morning to a bright, trance-inducing light that tries to suck them up into an alien mothership. Over 94 minutes they stare out at the space ship, squabble about leaving the apartment, but ultimately don't.

The visuals, inspired by The Matrix, Invasion of the Body Snatchers and District 9, divert attention from the dialogue that's hacked from countless clichéd genre films. But there's no fun to be found in the script, and tension is swapped for bluster. The few original effects sequences highlights that all involved should stick to their day jobs.



Monsters

Distributor Momentum Pictures
Certificate 12
Price £18 (£20 Blu-ray)
Available 11 April
RATING



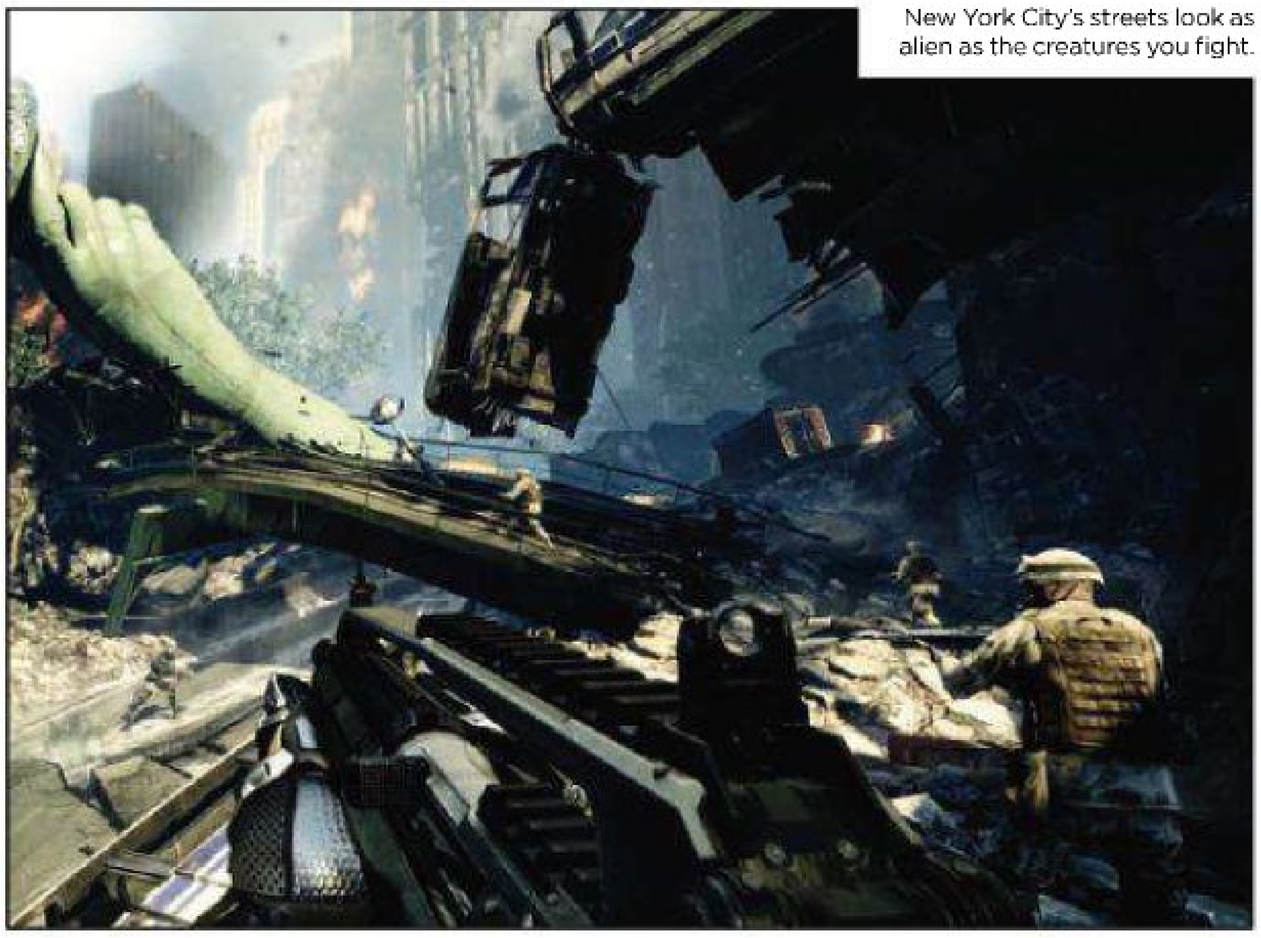
District 9 proved sci-fi magic can be achieved on the cheap. Monsters goes one step further: director Gareth Edwards created all the visual effects in his bedroom. See page 16 for an in-depth look at how he achieved this amazing feat.

Set in the near future, an alien life form begins to move from an infected zone on the Mexican/US border. The army is mobilised and anyone caught in the middle is in trouble. Not good news for US tourist Samantha Wynden and photojournalist Andrew Kaulder who must try and cross the 'zone' before the US forces turn up the heat.

With real locations standing in for the film's ruined border towns, Monsters creates a believable naturalistic dystopia; the aliens' appearance is reserved for subdued cameos. Although clumsy when revealing its comment on America's immigration policy, Edwards still manages to craft a worthy sci-fi nightmare on a pittance.

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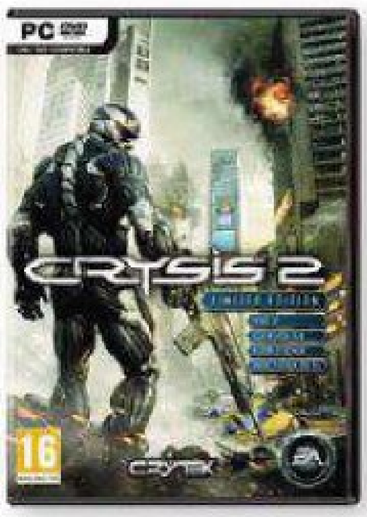
New York City's streets look as alien as the creatures you fight.

Crysis 2

INVISIBLE TERROR Aliens scatter from a Nanosuited killer as he storms through stunning surroundings

Format PC, PS3, Xbox 360 **Publisher** EA **Price** £35 (PC download)/£50
Available Now **Web** www.ea.com/crysis-2

Unfurling in an alien-ravaged New York City in the year 2023, Crysis 2 puts you in control of Alcatraz, the game's one-man killing machine. He just happens to be powered by the Nanosuit 2, an advanced piece of combat armour.



In the game this suit enables you to cloak yourself, leap 50 feet into the air and, if you're feeling particularly frivolous, kick a taxi at unsuspecting alien foes. It ensures that no firefight or alien encounter plays out the same way. Although the game's heavily cinematic, the choices the suit offers entertain new playful ways to resolve a mission.

We've all seen our fair share of decimated cities in the past, but no game does it like Crysis 2. Fire effects, lighting, water and dust particles are beautifully rendered. But, putting technical wizardry aside, Crysis 2 earns points for its art direction. Eyes roll when you hear that yet another video game will be set among the concrete canyons of the city that never sleeps. But with an art team that includes the likes of Marek Okon, you know there'll be an original take on familiar surroundings. The new New York feels elegant and spacious. It's a true and unique playground to test out your power suit's abilities. The suit itself is boldly visualised and resembles a skinless warrior, his flexing anatomy proudly on display.



The phrase concrete jungle never seemed so apt.

Crysis 2 is one of the most technically advanced games you're likely to see this generation on both consoles and PC. If you've got the money and the setup, we suggest you dish out for the PC version because it's nothing short of gaming Valhalla. Otherwise pick the PS3 edition, which comes complete with 3D mode. Crysis 2 is the Rolls-Royce of games, a beautifully designed package that purrs with technical know-how.

RATING

Also look at...

New brick-based Star Wars fun and a more refined gaming experience



LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars

Format PS3, Wii, Xbox 360, PC
Publisher Activision
Price £40
Available Now
RATING

Traveller's Tales LEGO spin-offs are here to stay. Anyone who's played the previous LEGO games in the series will be familiar with the format – navigate levels inspired by scenes from classic movies made in LEGO, collecting bricks as you go. But there's a fresh and hilarious take on the Clone Wars storyline and a massive increase in length to entice you back. A dynamic split-screen mode that enables you to explore levels at your own pace without the annoyance of being tethered to the same screen as your co-op partner also adds to the gameplay.

The game weaves in and out of events from the new TV series, shoehorning in reams of epic space battles, lightsaber brawls, vehicle missions and a meaty roster of characters including Mace Windu, Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi. With an increase in size and scale, LEGO Star Wars was, is and always will be beautifully crafted but simplistic fun.





Dragon Age II

Format PC, PS3, Xbox 360
Publisher EA
Price £35 (PC) / £50
Available Now
RATING

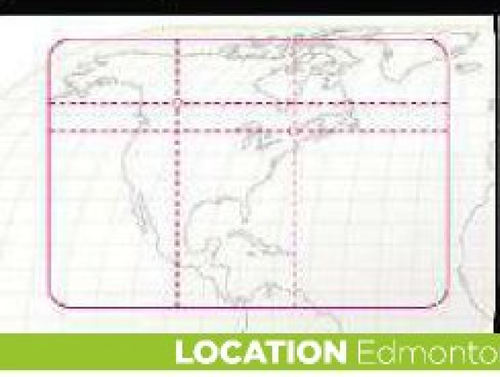
The changes to Dragon Age II have worked. This RPG's look has been refined and imbued with a new clean, sharp and distinctive style, resulting in a breathtaking experience. Running on Dragon Age Origin's Eclipse engine, the sequel is more vibrant and colourful, popping with luscious environments that hook your eye.



Gameplay hasn't been overlooked, either. The flood of text responses to character interaction has gone, there's a simpler Mass Effect-style three answer system and every character is voice acted. Combat is equally swift and delivers more immediate melee combat, though those who like some tactics in their RPGs will find it wanting.

A familiar formula and story made the original engrossing, but better pacing, combat and visuals offer a fresher experience, albeit one that's courting the consoles more than its traditional PC home.

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LOCATION Edmonton and Montreal **RECENT PROJECT** Dragon Age 2 **WEB** www.bioware.com



The art team shifted gear for Dragon Age 2, refocusing the style to offer something more unique in a very grounded genre.

BioWare

MAKING WORLDS Ranked one of Canada's top 100 employers, BioWare creates some of the strangest worlds in video games and it takes a lot of art work to do it...

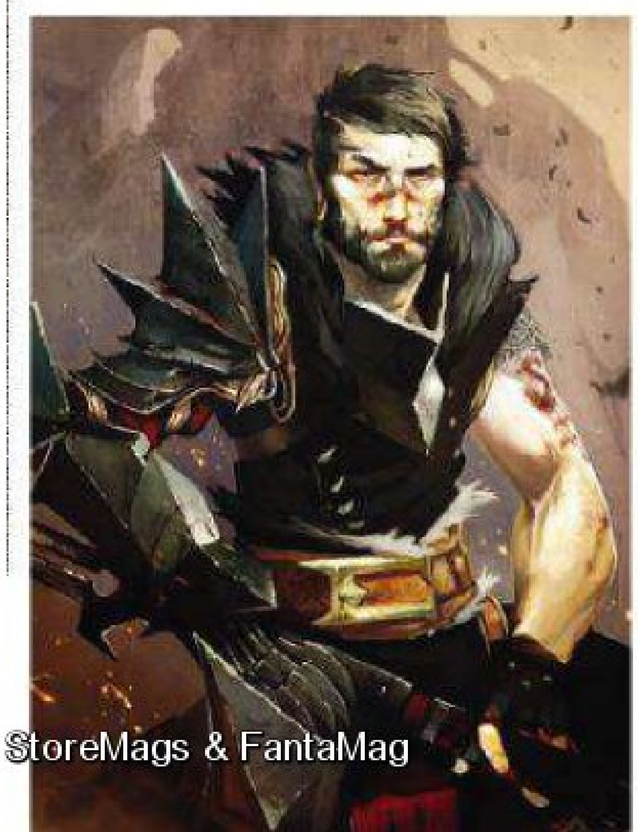
"Our vision is to create, deliver and evolve the most emotionally engaging games in the world," states BioWare co-founder and group general manager Dr Ray Muzyka. Although BioWare is now owned by Electronic Arts, this is the same mantra that set the Canadian studio apart from its rivals when it launched 16 years ago.



After graduating as medical doctors in 1992, Dr Ray Muzyka, Dr Greg Zeschuk and Dr Augustine Yip began working on ideas for a video games company. By 1995 they had launched BioWare, with ambitions to create roleplaying games that focused on unique worlds and rich stories.

After successes with licensed worlds in Baldur's Gate and Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic, BioWare took the plunge and began developing their own properties. The first was the martial arts epic Jade Empire and the most recent being Mass Effect 2 – one of the highest rated games ever.

Art director Matt Goldman has been with BioWare since the beginning. "Each project presents its own problems and opportunities for personal growth," says Matt. "Each title has pushed my kung-fu to the limits, but it was Jade Empire that was the most interesting of times."



The new style for Dragon Age 2 is both visual and practical. The new direction was chosen because it reinforces the themes of the game's story.

Jade Empire was BioWare's first original property developed on new technology, and marked many firsts for the studio: first 3D game, first console game and the first project as full leads. "I'm really proud of the way Jade Empire turned out, but it was an immense amount of learning to do," says Matt. "I'll never forget the opportunity, support and coaching given to us by the doctors."

With a track record for developing expansive, involving games set within believable worlds, BioWare needs to create a lot of artwork and demands a lot of investment from its art team, especially at the concept stage.

"Concepts represent a first-encounter with a character, space, spell or special move," states lead designer Mike Laidlaw, explaining how at this phase of development the artists, writers and gameplay designers come together



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PROJECTS Baldur's Gate, Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic, Jade Empire, Dragon Age Origins, Mass Effect 2

ARTIST INTERVIEW

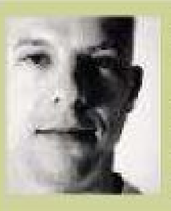
MATT GOLDMAN

BioWare's longstanding art director reveals all

How many artists work at BioWare and what would an artist need in their portfolio to work for you?
There are about 100 artists and animators across the Edmonton and Montreal studios. Some studios will be looking for your ability to use certain software. 3ds Max, ZBrush, Photoshop are standard industry authoring tools we use, but software skills don't give you the ability to make good artistic judgment calls. What we'd be looking for is a portfolio that shows your skills, design sense and versatility. Reading between the lines we're after commitment and passion to art, animation and storytelling. Does the applicant draw, paint, sculpt, build models, or animate as a hobby? Have they ever done a comic book, a short film, costume design, or figure drawings?

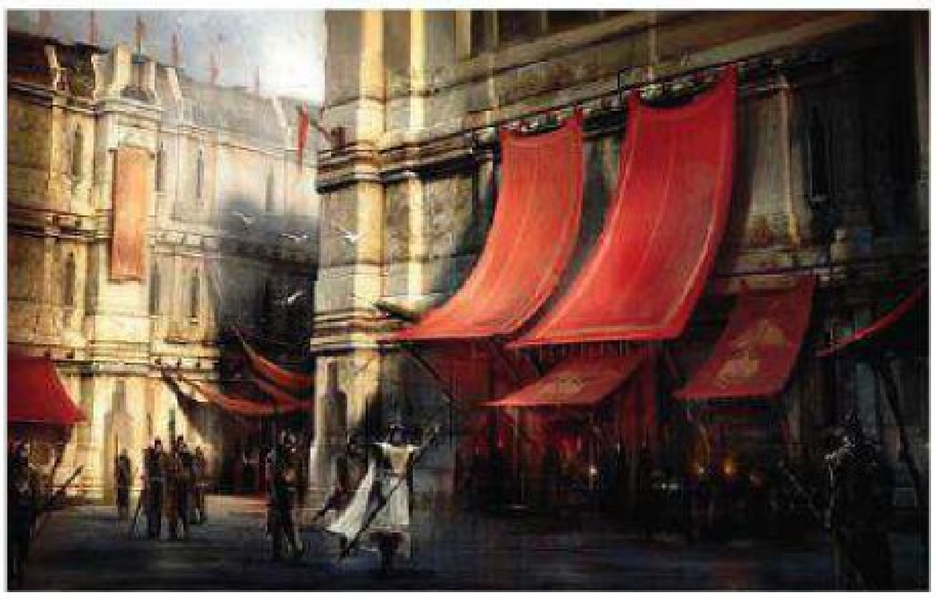
Is there a BioWare art style?
Not exactly, although the projects generally tend towards the representative side of the spectrum. Part of what makes BioWare projects so great to work on is the autonomy to develop an exciting and appropriate art style.

How far does BioWare's technology dictate the look of your game's worlds?
Technology is one factor among many that needs to be juggled. Dragon Age demands certain features such as robust inventory, conversation and cinematic scripting that many other titles don't really have to worry about. Graphically, we select the features that best illustrate what our game is supposed to be about.



Matt is the art director at BioWare and best known for putting characters through emotional turmoil.

blog.bioware.com



"The foundation to our success are our smart, creative, passionate employees at all our locations," says Dr Ray Muzyka, co-founder of BioWare.

to create a perfect image or moment captured in a concept that helps push the game forward in a unified direction.

Part of BioWare's success can be levied at the staff's struggle for perfection. The team are open to redraw ideas rather that repeat mistakes. Dragon Age 2 is a prime example. It features a distinctive look that's different to the first game in the series, Dragon Age: Origins.

> **Our inspiration is the real world, rather than drawing from other fantasy**

"While Origins was attractive the team wasn't satisfied with the overall result and cited indistinct vision as an obstacle in taking Dragon Age to the next level. The styling was divorced from the subject matter and didn't stand out in a market increasingly crowded with very good games," says Matt. "We built a much stronger vision that resonated with the core themes of the game and worked to harmonise the technology and intended styling."

With such a pursuit of perfection and innovation, the BioWare team is always looking for inspiration. Consistency is key to the team's success. "In a lot of ways, our inspiration is the real world, rather than drawing from other fantasy," says Mike. "In the end, we're asking ourselves, 'Why would someone do that?' or 'How would this country react to these events?' If we can't answer those questions, we work on world and character building until we can, and sometimes out of that process we learn that, a character wouldn't do what we thought, but by that point both the character and the story of the game are much stronger."

At BioWare concept art informs the bigger picture. It's used as a springboard to dig into a game's world, uncover flaws and highlight new directions. It's a process the studio has developed over time. "Lessons learned tend to focus on basics like clarity of vision, solid values and guiding principles," says Dr Ray Muzyka, who adds that "being humble" and "being open and honest" has helped BioWare grow. It's a sentiment Matt agrees with, saying BioWare values personality and insight just as much as knowledge of software such as Photoshop. "From the top down BioWare promotes a culture of humility and excellence. Our artists are among the best in the business and are looking for ways to reach out to the other disciplines and make the project better together, but there's remarkably little showboating," says Matt, quipping, "maybe it's the brutal winters?"



BioWare employs over 100 artists to work across its games portfolio, helping to flesh out the studio's dynamic universes.



MAC & PC

WELCOME TO THE ImagineFX DVD

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

To tie in with this month's epic theme we've rounded up some of the best landscape workshop videos for you!



EPIC ART

Epic video collection

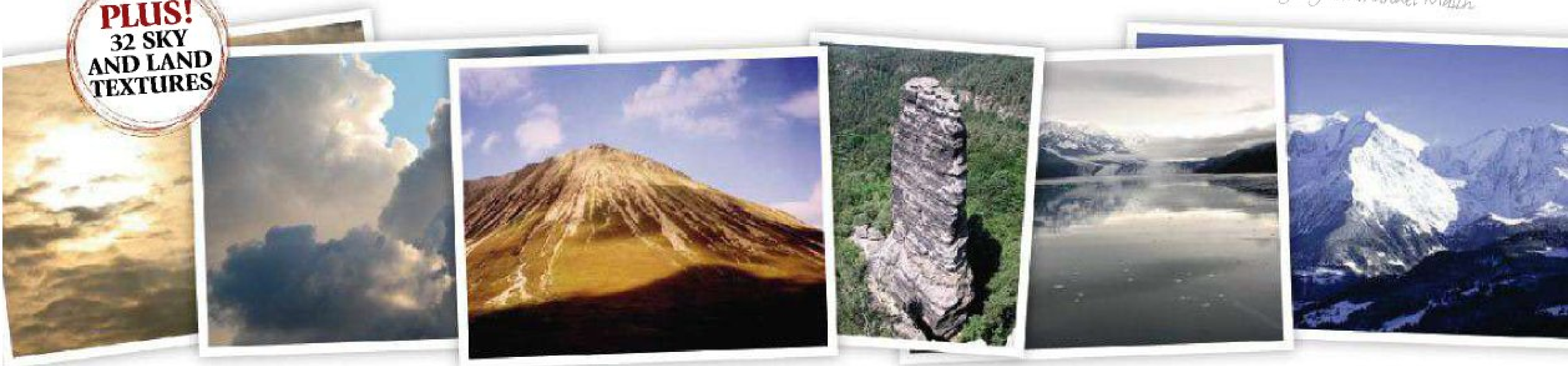
Learn how to work with perspective and depth, use a limited colour palette, integrate sketches into a fantasy landscape, paint old-school sci-fi and more!

FEATURING ART FROM...

Adam Paquette | Alex Chu | **Bill Corbett** | Emrah Elmasli
Mike McCain | Emmanuel Malin | **Sam Burley**

See page 26 for Sam Burley's landscape art, and page 84 for a masterclass on texture usage by Emmanuel Malin

PLUS! 32 SKY AND LAND TEXTURES





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Paint a sea with drama

Sam Burley's environment skills come to the fore in this sci-fi seascape image

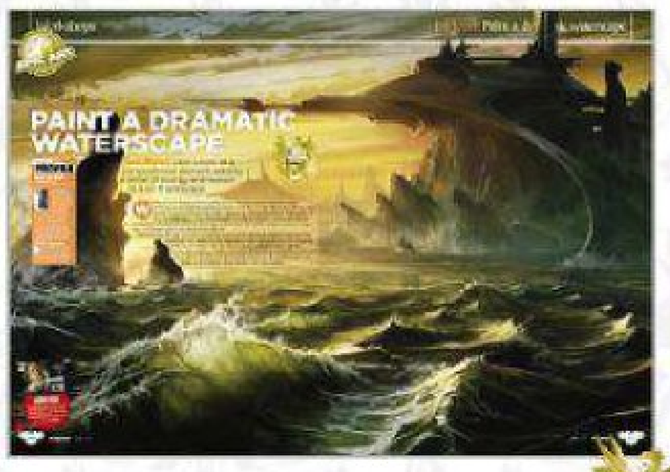


Use textures in your art

Watch as Emmanuel Malin achieves great results with just a few choice textures



WORKSHOP FILES





76 **Paint a dramatic waterscape**
• WIPs • final image • brushes • video



82 **Show a futuristic battlefield vista**
• WIPs • brushes • final image



84 **Get epic results with textures**
• WIPs • final image • brushes • video



88 **Get hands-on with your iPad**
• WIPs • final image



94 **Quick ways to better portraits**
• WIPs • final image • video



100 **Unify a range of fantasy genres**
• WIPs • final image • brushes • video

TOP ART ADVICE!





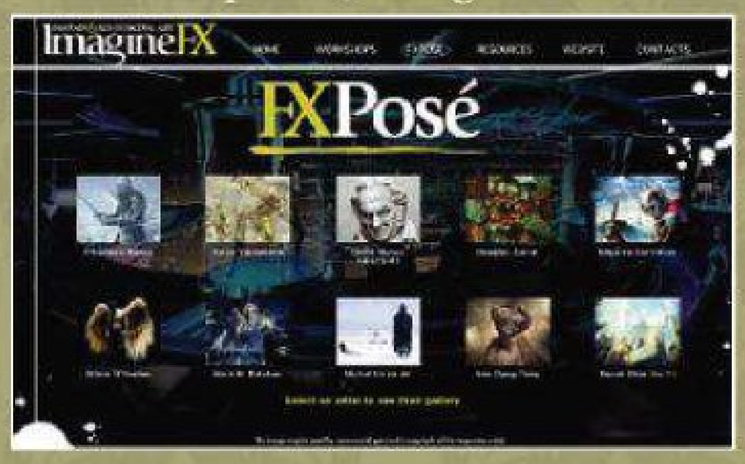
Experts answer your questions

Light and shade Jonathan Standing reveals how to unify a lighting scheme using layers

I am the law Learn how to design a mech for a futuristic police force with Remko Troost

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Andrey Kasatsky

"The DAVE School helped me master a variety of 3D applications and allowed me to channel my creativity in ways that I couldn't imagine before."

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